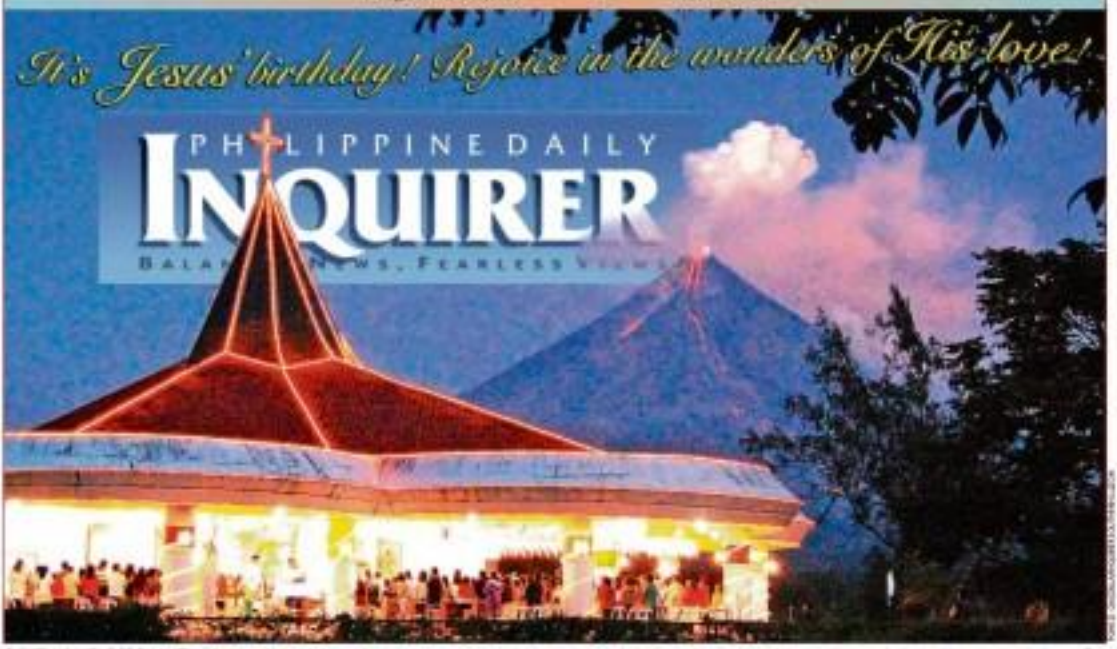
Friday, December 25, 2009 • Vol. 25 / No. 17



CHRISTMAS IN TIME OF CALAMITY With Mayon Volcano belching ash columns prior to an expected violent explosion in the background, residents attend the close Mass at the Aquinas University chapel in Legazpi City

Ferry, fish boat collide

3 killed, 24 missing in Christmas eve tragedy off Cavite

PARADE OF STARS Filipino boxing idol Manny Pacquiao and the cast of his movie "Wapakman" wave to the crowd from their float during the "Parade of Stars" on Roxas Boulevard in Manila, signaling the start of this year's Metro Manila Film Festival. ROY DOMINGUEZ

By Kristine L. Alave in Manila and Marlowe Cinco Inquirer Southern Luzon

AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE were killed and 24 others were missing on Christmas eve after a passenger ferry smashed into a fishing vessel off the coast of Maragondon town in Cavite, near the mouth of Manila Bay.

Tragedy struck when the wooden-hulled MV Cenelyn B collided with the steel-hulled FV Anna-Ito northwest of Limbones Island at around 2:25 a.m. yesterday, the Philippine Coast Guard said.

The island is about 5 kilometers from the Maragondon mainland.

The ferry, which came from North Harbor in Manila on its way to Lubang Island in Occidental Mindoro, was carrying 59 passengers and 14 crew members.

Twelve passengers were aboard the deep-sea fishing vessel that was on its way from the Turtle Islands to the Navotas Fish Port.

FERRY A2

Pacman star twinkles, but where's Krista?

By Bayani San Diego Jr. Entertainment

WHETHER GAY OR GHOULISH, in good times or in bad, they never failed to bring holiday cheer.

But someone's conspicuously absent in the colorful parade of stars marking yesterday's opening of the 35th Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

"Where's Krista?" some spectators naughtily asked.

The first for "Wapakman," a superhero flick starring seven-time world boxing champion MOVIES A3

GMA cites martial law troopers

By Christine V. Esguerra and Jacolyn B. Uy

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday gave troops a pat on the back for enforcing eight days of martial law in Maguindanao "without any complaints of human rights abuse."

In her final appearance as Commander in Chief at the 74th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Ms Ar-

GMA CITES A6

No rescue for Mayon holdouts, gov warns

By Roy H. Nazol and Ephraim Aguilar Inquirer Southern Luzon and Alexis Pape in Manila

LEGAZPI CITY—ALBAY OFFIcials yesterday warned villagers that no one would come to help them if they refused to evacuate and Mayon Volcano erupted violently, but the holdouts said they preferred to spend Christmas in their homes than in government centers.

Gov. Joey Salceda issued the warning as troops launched a hunt for the hard-headed ones amid threats of a major eruption by the most active Philippine volcano.

"If you are there, you die there. There is no way of rescuing people (if) rescuers would also be killed," Salceda said in a press briefing.

In a yet another frightening display of its power, Mayon

NO RESCUE A7

50 things that changed people's lives in a decade

NEW YORK—WAS IT ONLY A decade ago that a blackberry was a mere warm season fruit? That green was, well, a color, and reality TV was that one show sandwiched between music videos on MTV?

There were, of course, huge political and social upheavals that rocked the world in the past decade, but there also were the gradual lifestyle changes that people do not always notice when they are happening; kind of like watching a child grow older. Here is an alphabetical look at 50 things that changed our lives since the beginning of the millennium.

Airports: Remember when you did not have to take off your shoes before getting on a plane? Remember when you could bring a bottled drink on board? Political terror changed all that.

Alternative medicine: From acupuncture to herbal supplements to alternative ways of treating cancer, alternative medicine became more mainstream than ever.

Apps: There is an app for that! The phrase comes from Apple iPhone advertising, but could apply to the entire decade's gadget explosion, from laptops to GPS systems. Sweet your car to give you di-

H THINGS A4

China billionaires wonder if money can buy love

BEIJING—LONELY THIS CHRISTMAS? Spare a thought for Beijing's billionaires.

The country's economic boom over the last three decades may have generated a clutch of super-wealthy Chinese, but it has not guaranteed all of them love.

On Sunday, a privileged group of 21 single billionaires and 22 single women attended what state media called one of the Chinese capital's most expensive parties ever—a match-making ball with tickets costing 100,000 yuan ($14,650) a head.

CHINA A7

ROCKFEST Palestinian dancers perform during the "Rock to Bethlehem" festival in the West Bank town.

Bethlehem gets first Christmas rock show

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK—Gone AE Ye Bethlehem, here's first Christmas rock festival.

A young musician who grew up near Jesus' traditional birthplace feels the old-fashioned way of marking the holiday—hanging around Manger Square and listening to carols—is a little dull.

So Emmanuel Hockenstein has organized a three-day bal-

ds of the bands that he hopes will attract bigger crowds to Bethlehem.

City elders, worried about putting off traditional pilgrims, are keeping the wailing electric guitars and pounding drums at a safe distance from the Church of the Nativity.

"We prefer that in Manger Square, we have the traditional music, the traditional choirs,

BETHLEHEM A6

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ2+	
result	23 12
2PCSO	20 24
9PM	14 7
SUPER 6/55	
result	9 3 3
2PCSO	2 0 3
9PM	7 8 0

SIX DIGIT+ (tentative)	
	0 6 8 6 7 2
LOTTO 6/49	
	22 26 31 32 37 39
	P4,639,539.60
SUPER LOTTO 6/49	
	3 10 19 30 39 43
	P89,240,500.00

Cardinal scores 'arrogant leaders'

By Dona Pazzibigan

MANILA ARCHBISHOP CARDINAL GAUDENCIO Rosales, in his Christmas message this year, assailed "arrogant leaders" who thought they were indispensable to the country as he exhorted Filipinos to vote next year for "honest, selfless and God-fearing" leaders.

Pointing out next year's presidential and national elections as "a very important and urgent choice of the next leaders who are crucial to the quest for peace,

He said power, which is spurred respect and love for everyone, "has often been reclassified by greed and dishonest behavior."

"Despite all efforts to stop wars and violence, peace remains only bright in the heart of men. Peace is also the consequence of a good choice, whether the choice is to love enough to not or to refuse a man who will lead others to lead others to progress," he said.

"The coming year 2013 is the nation's year of choice for honest, selfless and God-fearing leaders who will serve with honesty, simplicity and humility," the cardinal added.

Rosales cautioned, "arrogant leaders who in the past thought that the nation could not go forward without them, had always been failures, and they had unfortunately brought the country down with them."

He did not identify who he was referring to.

He then renewed his call to the electorate to carefully examine their choices in the first nationwide automated elections on May 13, 2013.

"The ultimate solution to our election problems does not entirely depend on the automated machines but in the well-thought and much-prayed choice, regardless of money or force, but considered only for the good of tomorrow," he said.

"That looks like an ideal scenario impossible to obtain...like in today we need the wonders of the Lord, who came touching people He saved by discipline and sacrifice under the supervision of the cross in order to attain the path to peace and success," he said.

The president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), Tandag Bishop Nereo Odchimar, in his Christmas message, said Christ's message of peace remained relevant and pressing today.

HAVEN FOR THE ELDERLY Mostly lush view of houses await the arrival of their occupants in Tanay, Rizal. RICHEY SOLAS

Transfer of elderly to Tanay stalled

By Nikko Dizon

THERE'S A NEW HOUSE IN the plan to move residents of the Golden Acres Home for the Aged in Quezon City to a new $13.10-million facility in Tanay, Rizal.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said employees were set to keep on the move, citing the high cost of transportation.

"Our target for the residents' transfer is as soon as possible," DSWD Engineer Joshua Balbalan told reporters during a visit to the facility earlier this month.

The more politically correct and sprawling new "Haven for the Elderly" would have been the DSWD's Christmas gift to the residents of Golden Acres.

The original plan was to transfer them last October. However, Balbalan said installation of the utilities, such as water and electricity, were still ongoing until the landscaping had yet to be completed.

Using the elderly

DSWD spokesperson Jane Cajucom said relatives of the residents could visit at the Tanay facility located at the four hectares Memorial Technoil National Technology Technoil Park in Tanay, Rizal.

However, Cajucom added, there were still social workers and other employees of the Golden Acres who continued to present the transfer.

Some have been using the elderly to push for protest against the transfer but the residents also realized the need to have a new place to live in, after the Golden Acres was flooded up to the chest during Storm Ondoy," Cajucom said in Filipino.

She acknowledged that the new facility was quite far—on average two-hour drive from Metro Manila on winding roads to Tanay.

Best option

Yun lang ang pinakamagandang option na pwede nating ibigay sa mga matatanda (That's the best option we can give to the elderly), Cajucom said.

The Social Welfare Employees Association of the Philippines (SWEP) said the Golden Acres staff would spend too much on transportation costs to get to Tanay from their homes in Metro Manila and might end up leaving for new jobs.

Both Balbalan and Cajucom expressed belief that moving out of Golden Acres to the Haven for the Elderly was the best option for the residents, aged 60 years old and above.

They argued that the one-hectare Golden Acres was too cramped for its 250 residents, located behind a shopping complex in North Edsa, the area is too noisy and polluted.

On the other hand, the five-hectare Haven for the Elderly boasts of also 400 square meter cottages, with spacious bathrooms equipped with intercoms and hot and cold water.

Each unit can accommodate 10 persons, with five units for the able-bodied residents, four for the weak and bed-ridden and one unit for the staff.

Cleaner air

It has an infirmary and a multi-purpose hall where the residents can have their exercise and activities, such as singing and dancing.

When asked by reporters if the elderly could withstand the chilly weather in Tanay, Balbalan said the residents would be given comforters. He said that the air was cleaner in the new facility than in crowded Quezon City.

Most Pinoys see happy Christmas

By Kate Pedroso
Inquirer Research

MAJORITY OF ADULT Filipinos expect a happy Christmas this year, according to the latest survey by the Social Weather Stations (SWS).

The fourth-quarter survey asked the question, "On the whole, can you say that your Christmas this year will be happy, sad or neither sad nor happy?"

Three out of five adult Filipinos (60 percent) expect a happy Christmas this year, while 29 percent expect it to be sad, and 10 percent say it will neither be happy nor sad.

Expectations of a happy Christmas was 61 percent in 2011, 77 percent in 2010, but starting in 2004, numbers started hitting the 50s and have remained depressed since, according to a statement released by the SWS on Wednesday.

It was 63 percent last year, 64 percent in 2007, 62 percent in both 2005 and 2006, and 64 percent in 2004, the SWS said.

Sad Christmas for Metro

On the other hand, the percentage of those who expect a sad Christmas this year is "significantly higher" than the 7 to 8 percent recorded from 2008 to 2006, matching the all-time high calculated level of 16 percent posted in 2004. Meanwhile, in 2003 and 2004, only 3 percent of Filipinos said they expected a sad Christmas.

Across areas, Christmas optimism is lowest in Metro Manila at 50 percent. It is 62 percent in Luzon outside Metro Manila, 66 percent in the Visayas and 71 percent in Mindanao.

"In Metro Manila, the 50 percent expecting a happy Christmas is 2009's five points lower from the 55 percent in both 2007 and 2008," the SWS said. "Happiness with Christmas has been lower among Metro Manila respondents than in other areas since 2005."

Meanwhile, Christmas pessimism among Metro Manilans has increased from 13 percent last year to 16 percent this year.

In Luzon, outside Metro Manila, the percentage of Filipinos expecting a happy Christmas has increased slightly from 59 percent last year to 62 percent this year. On the other hand, 8 percent of respondents expect a sad Christmas this year—a figure unchanged since 2006.

In the Visayas, the percentage of those upbeat about Christmas has "barely changed" from 70 percent last year to 66 percent this year. Those who expect a sad Christmas this year is 11 percent—up from 8 percent the previous year.

In Mindanao, 71 percent look forward to a happy Christmas—a figure "similar" to the 70 percent posted last year. Those expecting a sad Christmas is 4 percent, up from 3 percent last year.

Among Ed's lawyer hit by double whammy

By Kristine L. Alave

THE COUNSEL OF DARWINGA Gov. Ed Panlilio got hit by a double whammy by suggesting that the Commission on Elections (Comelec) be dissolved.

In a seven-page order released yesterday, the Comelec Second Division tacked a motion by lawyer Romeo Fontanilla asking its three members to exhibit themselves from the electoral case between Panlilio and his rival, Lilia Pineda.

The division also issued an order directing Comelec Second Division clerk of court Atty. Elmer Marcelo to submit a report on the case in 10 days why he should not be cited in contempt for "insubordination."

Panlilio, a priest-turned-politician, lost Pineda, an ally of Pampanga Governor Lilia Pineda, by 1,247 votes in the 2010 elections.

Panlilio commissioner Rowena Perez said Fontanilla in his motion for the court when he claimed to the media that he and commissioners Lucenito Tagle and Elias Yusoph, favored Pineda.

Brandon, Perez said, also filed several pleadings that delayed the proceedings.

"The inaction of attorney Fontanilla undermines the independence of this Commission, shows utter disrespect for, and contempt against, the Commission and threatens the very existence of due process and fair trial," the order said.

That the Comelec ought to resolve Panlilio's charge that Pineda cheated showed "the efficiency, good organization, responsibility, and effectiveness of the [two] lawyers," the order said.

Perceptions on the wisdom and language of the judge are not enough to conclude that the presiding officer is biased, Perez said.

It was also an insufficient ground for petitioning that the commissioners exhibit "favoritism from the case."

Escape from Siberia: The Russians are coming . . .

By Jovanee Jurang

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY Russian tourists from Siberia will visit the country before the year ends and will have a more hospitable climate in celebrating the Russian Orthodox Christmas (Jan. 7) and New Year (Jan. 14), according to the Department of Tourism (DOT).

Vesna Buenaventura, head of DOT's Team Europe, said the group was expected to arrive in Manila on Jan. 27 on a chartered flight from the western Russian territory of Kamchatka.

Kamchatka, located in Northeast Asia, is part of Russia's Siberian region, where subzero temperatures harsh enough to freeze most of the time, making tourists to escape the warmer or tropical countries such as the Philippines.

"This is the second time for the country to host a chartered flight from this region of Russia. Of note this time is the presence of members of the Kamchatka Direct Association. Despite the financial crisis, the Russian travel company Spirit still pushed aggressively for this charter, even cancelling the regular charter program to Thailand in favor of the Philippines," Buenaventura said in a statement.

The statement also quoted Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Ilagan as saying that he welcomed tourist charter programs that boosted arrivals from Russia's extreme regions.

Buenaventura said the Russians planned to visit Manila, Bohol, Cebu, Boracay and Mindoro.

They will stay in the Philippines until Jan. 15, 2013.

MAMMY IN MAYON Sen. Mamay Villar distributes relief goods to residents displaced by the ongoing eruption of Mayon Volcano at the Gogon Elementary School in Albay. Villar is the standard-bearer of the Nacionalista Party in the 2013 presidential election. EV UDO

TRI-MEDIA BLITZ

'Air war' to put Noynoy drive into higher gear

FOLLOWS SUIT, SOMEWHAT YET...

To help maintain the large lead of Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III in the polls, his campaign is going on the offensive with an aggressive "air war" campaign of ads on TV, radio and print starting January, the Aquino camp said on Wednesday.

Aquino campaign manager Ibarra Abad and spokesperson Gilberto Lauzon said the tri-media campaign would help cement and enlarge what they described as a "solid base" of Aquino supporters, that they pegged at 45 percent of the electorate as shown by the Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations surveys.

Although they have yet to conduct an aggressive ad campaign, they noted that Aquino's lead in the polls remained strong at 45 to 46 percent of survey respondents.

Core vote

"We are confident that this is already his core vote and there is a strong potential for moving up next year when we take a more aggressive position in our ads and campaign stories," Abad said in an interview.

"He will range an air war promoting our candidacies and we expect those numbers to increase further," Lauzon said.

They added that the "Hindi ka Nag-iisa" TV commercial did not come from the campaign, rather it was a "love collection" from those his talk show hosts Boy Abunda and Kris Aquino, who is also the senator's sister.

Both Abad and Lauzon said Aquino's poll numbers remained strong because his campaign message against corruption was resonating with voters.

Abad said that before the death of the senator's mother—former President Corazon Aquino—in August, voters told pollsters they were looking for a new president who was "pro-poor, approachable and public" of running the country.

"They had a pragmatic thinking given the worsening economic situation ... anti-corruption was down in the list. But (after the Aquino's death), 'integrity, transparency and anti-corruption' surged to the forefront of what voters wanted," he said. "This was a big change. From having a pragmatic view, they had a more aspiring viewpoint."

Glaring example

Because of this, Abad said the Aquino-Roxas campaign would continue to hammer its message that corruption has become ingrained under the Arroyo administration, it has diverted government resources intended for basic services like health, education, and nutrition.

"If, before, (just) five government contractors (a) left (on) this street (as shown by the glaring example of the Amparanoy," he said. "Magsisidatan is the chief power province but here you see unimaginable corruption and gross abuse of power that led, not just to the non-delivery of basic services, but also to the loss of life."

Abad declined to give details about Aquino's new ads although he said they would follow the Aquino-Roxas campaign plan which is to be "non-conventional" and "non-traps (not traditional politics)."

"It has to be different," he said.

Philip C. Tubeza

Eric Tan; 52

CHINESE BUSINESSMAN TAIPAN DIES

Eric Tan died on Sunday. He was 52.

His interment is scheduled today Dec. 25, at 11 a.m. at the Manila Memorial Park after a Mass to be offered at the Arlington Chapel on Aurora Avenue, Quezon City at 7 a.m.

He is survived by his wife Amy and his four children Melissa, Chelsea, Xavier Irwin and Jerome.

Overtime at Naia

By Jovino Aning

REGULATION PERSONNEL AT the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) and all other airports have been ordered to render overtime work in the next two weeks in anticipation of a huge volume of arriving and departing travelers during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan yesterday said he has instructed all immigration personnel assigned at the Naia and other major airports to report for duty during the long holiday break.

The employees are also likewise prohibited from filing their leaves of absence during the same period, except for serious illness, trauma or in cases of emergency, he said.

At the same time, Libanan directed Ferdinand Lampad, chief of the 24 Airport Operations Division, and all immigration officers and their supervisors in the different ports to exercise extreme vigilance in monitoring all arriving and departing foreigners.

The order, according to the bureau chief, aims to prevent undesirable aliens, particularly terrorists and fugitives, from taking advantage of the holiday rush to sneak into the country undetected.

High alert

"It is during these times that our immigration officers should be on the highest state of alert to ensure that our country's security is not threatened by the entry of aliens who pose a threat to public safety," Libanan declared.

The immigration officers were instructed to closely scrutinize the travel papers and conduct a strict profile of each and every arriving foreigners.

"Those whose names appear in our blacklist should be escorted outright and booked on the first available flight to his port of origin," Libanan said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, December 25, 2009
The Nativity of the Lord

1st Reading: Is 52:7-10
2nd Reading: Heb 1:1-6
Gospel: Jn 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, found life in him, life which for humans was also light. Light that shines in the dark; light that darkness could not overcome. It was came, read by God, his name was John. He came as bear witness, as a witness to introduce the Light so that all might believe through him.

He the Light was coming into the world, the true Light that enlightens everyone. He came to his own, yet his own people did not receive him. But all who have received him he empowers to become children of God for they believe in his Name. Those are born, not without seed or carnal desire or will of man: they are born of God. And the Word was made flesh; he had his tent pitched among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son coming from the Father, fullness of truth and blessing. Gracious.

From his fullness we have all received, favor upon favor. For God had given us the Law through Moses, but Truth and Loving Kindness came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the Only-Son-made-one knows the one who lives and with the Father.

Commentary

When we are with family and friends at Christmas, we are at our best. Christ's call is to give to all of us, the opportunity to share in his eternal, loved life. Even those our darkness could not extend until the small growth moments that touch our souls, to bring us vulnerability and receptivity to God's presence. Above all, Christ invites us to be held like in our birthland to trust in ourselves, who always knows where we are and what we need. As saints, who knows the difference between a fish and a snake, a scorpion or another egg, when it comes to nurturance and protection.

Christmas Day hopes hope alive in our sometimes jaded and weary hearts, by reminding us of the infant Jesus, as we sit quietly, allowing peace and simplicity to surprise our souls. The nativity is God's blessing garment. And our invitation to the mystery of this nativity. Our prayer invites Christmas cheer, should be for our acquaintance Christ's birth with an open heart and contemplative vision. Christmas is memorable in that it challenges us to display our gifts of peace on earth and goodwill to all human kind.

50 things that changed people's lives in a decade

From page A3

architect to Mexico houses in Chinese, as by a Frenchwoman named Stephane? There was an app for that.)

AARP (American Association for Retired People): crash. ... for baby boomers: Some presumed. disinterested. turned 50 this decade. The pop singers Madonna and Prince. Comic Ellen DeGeneres. The Smurfs. Michael Jackson, the King of Pop—who also died at 50. and some prominent "early boomers" turned 60: Rachel Ray. Spokesperson and actress Meryl Streep, for example.

Aging. Nobody wanted to look their age anymore. Clothes for 30-year-old women started looking more like clothes for 18-year-olds. Parents looked more like teens, long hair was popular for all ages, and in many more women's bodices seemed to morph into one single gypsy.

Web blogs

Blog: 1 blog, you blog, he blogs ... How did we spend our time before blogging? There we were, more than 100 million of them Web logs out there in cyberspace.

Blackberries: Considered essential by corporate CEOs and money-churning play dates. Introduced in 2002, the smartphone may no longer be the most fun 20 million people are crowding in to make; Research In Motion Ltd.

Book clubs: Thanks in part to TV personality and business mogul Oprah Winfrey, the book-club was not only a pastime in book discussion clubs but a growing estimate on those by publishers.

Cable. Cable 24-hour news made the evening network news seem quaint, cable distance made the phone call of decade's end, even Oprah was making the move to cable.

Cameras: Remember those trips to get film developed? Nope? Ask your grandmother has a digital camera, and she is probably taking photos with her cellphone or uploading them to a photo-sharing site.

Obsession with celebs

Celebrity culture: Celebrity magazines fed a growing appetite with celebrities and the everyday mistakes of their lives. By decade's end, Americans (63 were obsessed, though Britney Spears and Angelina Jolie had coined many terms for us to refer to their kids and Ben Kingsley. Celebrity websites like TMZ. look hold until decade.

Cell phones: Cell phones are now used by more than 85 percent of the US population and by more than 4 billion people worldwide. On the decade. They have become something of a status symbol and a must-have accessory. Ringtones. Text messaging. Photos. Games. Internet. Music. Even Tunes.

Chefs: Chefs on hot! The Food Network, whose ratings skyrocketed this decade, evolved in viewers with high-octane personalities like Richard Blais and Bobby Flay, Emeril Lagasse and Giada De Laurentiis. Meryl Streep starred in a cinematic paean to the love-lobe Child.

Comedies: As in, we are all expected to be connected, everybody, all the time. Box e-mails you on a Sunday? Better answer, because unless you are off to dinnertime, you have an excuse.

Congress: A new TV series called "Congress Town" focuses on a phenomenon that seemed to mimic this decade: Women dating younger men.

Ubiquitous clogs

Crocs: These ubiquitous plastic clogs debuted in 2002 and became the shoes endorsed to hate. Kids love 'em, but there are still apologies people make for their destructive. Not to be debated. Fact: Judy Michelle Sbarra, who owns them on vacation in 2009.

Dancing: Dancing never went out of style, but this decade's was the huge explosion of dancing contests like "So You Think You Can Dance" and "Dancing With the Stars."

Dating: Dating was transformed like never before due by Internet sites, rendering other forms of dating practically obsolete. And it was not just the tendency of the smartest young Seniors found love online, too.

DIBer: Suddenly DVR-ing is a verb, and what it means is that Those's no reason to ignore commercials when channel your program is on, and when time.

Embarrassment rules television: Embarrassment has shown been part of comedy—you need only think of Don Rickles—but this is the decade of cringe-worthy Larry David in "Curb Your Enthusiasm," Ricky Gervais, and of course Sacha Baron Cohen, who in Borat and Bruno drained pathos the entire country.

Social networking

Facebook: Can you believe this social networking site was once limited only to Harvard students? Now it is extraordinary dimension by more than 300 million users globally and is often seen from of social etiquette. Whom to friend on Facebook?

Fun: This was the decade that let become the enemy of The state. New York City banned trans fats, and Alabama—second in national obesity rankings—introduced a law on overweight state workers.

Gadgets: If it isn't said Bart parks in the White House who liked a apple—Cher was the decade of the boobs, when we all developed spoiled pediatric. Even a burger became a gourmet decision in Daniel Boulud's eatery (with truffles), with fries and ethnic.

Google: This era the decade. Had Google became a part of our brain function. You know that guy who was in that movie—Guy Pearce? Oh, it's Jared Google.

Can't get lost anymore

GPS: We cannot get lost anymore—or at least it is pretty difficult, with the ubiquitous GPS systems. But you had better type in your location correctly: One couple made a 400-mile mistake that year by typing "Corpi" rather than "Taos."

Helicopter parenting: Translation: Helicopter hovering and so do many parents. After years of obsessive attention to safety and achievement of the youngest children, some said a backlash was underway.

Information overload: An explosion in Internet use led to an overload of information about practically everything. It is so say fingertips, but is it accurate? Some call it part of a larger phenomenon, namely...

Instant gratification: Oftentime listeners as being able to get anything you want online in no time. Often referred to as a theme of the decade.

iPods: An icon of the digital age, it is hard to believe that portable media player was launched in 2001. Six years later, the 100 millionth iPod went sold.

Coach for everything

Life coaches: In the eighties, there was a coach for everything. In the 'aughts, not the 'teens? Some say life coaches are overkill. Is therapists without the license or requirements.

Musicals: They have been around forever, but this decade musicals came back to Film, starting with "Moulin Rouge" and "Chicago." But for kids, it was Disney's extremely successful "High School Musical" franchise—three movies and counting—that brought back the classical magic.

Netflix: The DVD by mail service, established in 2007, announced its one-billionth DVD delivery this year. For many, there does on top of the TV are just one more thing to process. subscriber.

Organic: Americans switched to (All three grocery carts with organic food, making it big business—now a $21-billion industry, up from $5.6 billion in 1997. At decade's end, Michelle Obama planted the first White House organic vegetable garden.

Pregnancy chic: If you've got it, flaunt it. That was the new edict of the pregnancy experience, with chic clothes that emphasized the bulging belly, personal pregnancy photos, and endless coverage of celebrity pregnancies.

Unwanted attention

Reality TV: As a nation, we became addicted to reality TV from the bowling Gosselins of "Jon & Kate Plus 8" to "Survivor Heidi" to "Project Runway." At decade's end, the Hunters of Balloon Boy fame and the children of gate-crashing fame pie took in TV some unwanted attention.

Recession chic: Sisters shrieked to more serious styles, and much black, as so-called "recession chic" took hold in the latter part of the decade.

Retro chic: Once you forget the smoking, the excess, the drugs, the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, the early 1960s deprived by the ABC series "Mad Men" once looked good. The swinging Madison Avenue ad men suits and skirts cool again.

Sexting: Combine sexting with a really dumb commercial blunder and you get the parents' nightmare. A survey from Bowdoin Gannett Internet & American Life Project found that 15 percent of teens aged 12-17 with a cell phone had received sexually suggestive images or videos.

Starbucks: It is a cliché that there is one on every block, but sometimes it seemed like it, and millions were reminded to succumb to good $4 or so on a coffee classic in the morning perhaps to soon half-cut, half-decaf vanilla latte with an extra shot.

A kill shove

Tattoos: It started innocuously enough—maybe a butterfly on the shoulder or a tribal symbol on the bicep. A few shamrocks from the Chinese alphabet later, it seemed any hipster who really meant it had a full sleeve of tattoos. The trend extended to middle-aged moms and even 'tween old Miley Cyrus.

Texting: It is still ching this, isn't? Hope so. This is the decade we don't communicating in the shortened style more messages. Get used to it. Email is so '90s.

TV reboots: Television screens became bigger and flatter, making some ordinary living rooms and dens the equivalent of big-studio screening rooms. At the same time, though, people were searching movies and videos on the Internet screens incompatible, their iPods or other mobile devices.

Tweens rulers: Tweens, especially girls, became an economic force to be reckoned with, buying everything from clothes to electronic devices to music and movies.

Tweet, retweet

Twitter: The new social network introduced tweets, retweets, follows and trending topics, in keeping the message 140 late 140 characters.

USB: We have the Cloud has functional four-year-old each a family. The for-hired eyeballers men everywhere, no matter the climate. Lot Sargasso instead no wasting more while drifting.

Wii: In a sea of ever-more-sophisticated video games, this simple console became the decade's breakout hit by appealing to the nongaming masses. Wii became a center of family fun, a source of exercise and even senior activity.

Wikipedia: A boon to lazy students everywhere, the open-source encyclopedia used the masses to police its content and keep them honest—it sometimes succeeded.

Yoga. Madonna, Gwyneth and other hunky celebrities brought the esoteric practice mainstream. By the end of the decade, even Dominos could do downward-facing dogs on their TV ads.

Youtube: Let's end this list and go full circle date by watching ... YouTube videos! The video-sharing site was born in 2005. Political candidates in 2008 even had their own YouTube channels. The most popular video yet: "Charlie Bit My Finger," in which baby Charlie bites the finger of his brother Harry. AP

Bethlehem gets first Christmas rock show

From page A2

the traditional Christmas carols," said Bethlehem Mayor Victor Batarseh.

The festivals nine foreign and four local acts are mostly performing as an outdoor stage in Bethlehem Nativity Here, and Hebronites, game player for the Palestinian pop rock band Incline Move, "we can get as loud as we want."

On Christmas Eve, though, Fleckenstein's four-man band gets to play in the prime venue, Manger Square, and in a nod to the occasion, will end its 45-minute rock with a rendition of "Silent Night."

Gradual revival

The festival, modest in scale in a sign of Bethlehem's gradual revival in a tourist industry that other glooms years when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict all but shut down the city.

In 2000, some 2 million tourists visited of the Palestinian territories, or four times the 2007 figure, and 40 percent came to Bethlehem, said the Palestinian tourism ministry. Rhoded Dabbas.

Most Bethlehem hotels are being built, increasing the number of rooms from 2,000 to 3,000 by next year, she said.

The tourism boomlet is part of efforts by Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to spur economic growth in the West Bank and produce a sense of normality, even as efforts to restart peace talks remain deadlocked.

In marketing Bethlehem, city officials seek to assure potential visitors that they are safe, while also playing over the hardships of life under Israeli military rule.

Ringed on 3 sides

Bethlehem, a town of 33,000 just south of Jerusalem, is ringed on three sides by Israel's West Bank separation barrier, portrayed by Israel as a shield against suicide bombers and by Palestinians as a land grab.

Israel has imposed some movement restrictions in the West Bank and pledged to facilitate the influx of pilgrims to Bethlehem, but the township hinders construction to disrupt the flow of visitors to the holy city.

The effect was that this well of opposition ... but the tourists, they are safe, they are welcome every minute and every day in this city," said Batarseh, who recently visited Indonesia and Bethlehem's sister city Joplin, Missouri, to drum up business.

Some 15,000 visitors are expected on Christmas Eve, about the same as last year, said Tony Khamis, a city official. Bagpipe lines of three tattooed, many woman music shops and local artisans were still many of their wares through the lantern, rather than to pilgrims.

However, the global economic crisis has taken a toll on demand for olive wood nativity scenes and Christmas ornaments, said Samira Ades of the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, which helps conduct Bethlehem's specialists through a network of churches in the United States.

Time for new ideas

Fleckenstein, the fledgling music impresario, said it was time for new ideas.

The son of a Bethlehem mother and German father, he grew up in Bethlehem, near Bethlehem. He said he had the inspiration for the rock festival after last year's family visit to Manger Square.

Traditionally, those sing Christmas carols in the square as pilgrims wait for the Midnight Mass to begin under nearby Church of the Nativity, built over the grotto where tradition says Jesus was born.

"It was really sad here, there was not much to do," Fleckenstein said of last year's festivities.

With the help of several Roman Catholic Church officials in Vienna, where he now lives, he brought the bands together for the high school Talitha Kumi from Bethlehem, Elias Habdi, pictured, and schools to get along.

13 groups, performers

The pair booked 13 groups and performers, including a Palestinian hip hop band, a dance troupe, a guitar-playing priest from the Holy Land and a group band from Germany.

On Monday evening, Fleckenstein's group—in addition to him, a drummer, vocalist and bass guitar player—rehearsed on the stage set up in the valley between Bethlehem's Bethlehem University.

On Tuesday evening, the first day of performances, a moment was relatively light, with only about 300 people showing up. But the small crowd was enthusiastic.

"It's the first time that Christ rock music in Bethlehem," said Fida Ghanem, 20, a project coordinator at the university. "It's fun, it's Christmas, and we should enjoy the time of the year." AP

Pacman star twinkles, but where is Krista?

From page A1

Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao, instantly becomes a crowd favorite during the traditional Christmastime spectacle—as though reprising the parades recounted in his honor whenever he returned victorious from his blockbuster fights abroad.

Unlike two years ago when he skipped the MMFF parade, Pacquiao kept a promise to attend this year and was visibly pleased as the schadenn of fans who have followed him from the airport lined boats.

"He had a great time and was very appreciative of the crowd's enthusiasm," said Megastream producers' Willie Tiong of Solar Entertainment.

Out-of-towners

Still, the crowds cruised their necks for a glimpse of Krista Kerakiko, Dingdong's real-life-real-estate and on-the-set romance liaisons with the real-multibillionaire fighter added a spicy of suspense to his latest ring conquest in Las Vegas last month. Both the fighter and the actress denied the rumors.

A Kobe number said "Krista was supposed to join [her costars] on the float, but backed out because she would be coming from an out-of-town trip."

Pacquiao, however, didn't complete the parade which lasted for about four hours, starting from the SMX Convention Center at the SM Mall of Asia complex in Pasay City and ending at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.

He got off the float on Quirino Avenue supposedly to catch a private plane to Central Luzon City and make it in time for the title bouts here with his family.

Despite a rough year marked by natural calamities, economic hardships and political violence, the MMFF continued to be a source of delight for movie fans as it garnered the country's most popular stars.

Film entries

Seven films made it to this year's festival.

These include "Ang Tanging," an action-fantasy film starring Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. The actor-politician came out in costume yesterday—as a mythical creature double—and mounted a float that featured a mocking dragon named "Bayani," his movie sidekick.

Comedian and perennial crowd-drawer Vic Sotto finally dusted off his familiar "Enteng Kabisote" persona and went for a horror-comedy flick this year with "Ang Darling Kong Aswang." Vampires and werewolves joined him on the float.

Sotto called out to their "Boss ng"—Sotto's show biz moniker—as the float went by.

Another horror entry, Regal Films' "Shake, Rattle & Roll XI," featured a float designed like a crumbling stone temple haunted by ghosts and monsters.

The second Regal entry, "Mano Po 6: A Mother's Curse," had an Oriental-motif complete with rich-brown features and a "price" of the Great Wall of China.

"Nobody, Nobody But ... Juan," top-billed by comic Ingrid Dolphy, turned ghostly in its "Sukdulan (more Pinoyness)" storyline ... with its prosaic street-stage and red curtains.

Like bouquet of roses

The float for the romantic drama "I Love You, Goodbye" was designed like a bouquet of roses. The fiction directed by Laurice Guillen and stars comebacking leading man Gabby Concepcion.

Early in the parade, the IMR team chain-ex tabochar Concepcion would bump into ex-wife Sharon Cuneta, lead star of "Mano Po 6."

"Only If I'm missing here," Concepcion told the reporters, referring to his daughter with Cuneta, when asked about appearing encounter with his ex-wife.

"I never imagined my comeback movie would be a film for sure. It's a big honor," Concepcion said.

More sections, please

Guillen said she hoped the MMFF organizers would come up with additional competitive sections, as well as a film market, "like in Cannes, to make the festival more exciting."

Guillen graciously acknowledged the parade even though she had just lost her actor husband and his new MMFF winning romance movie partner Aubrey Delgado in career last march.

As the saying goes, "the show must go on."

And it also went on for Cuneta, who was still mourning the death of long-time manag Lorena Barrios who passed away on Saturday.

"It's a happy time. It's a time to celebrate. It's Christmas. It's on. It's a time to celebrate. It's Christmas. It's on. It's a time to celebrate. It's Christmas. It's on

Survivors narrate escape from sinking boat

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THERE WAS NO TIME TO think. It was act and survive.

Such was the recollection of 19-year-old Sunreal Dirk Villa as about 80, along with other passengers of the MV Carolyn II, were tossed from slumber by a loud crash followed by intermittent flash from the boat's siren to don life jackets.

Villena, a student at Don Bosco School in Makati, said it only took seconds for him and other passengers to get trapped inside the dark cabin and for the ship to capsize.

"Two members of the crew woke up the passengers and instructed us to wear the life jacket because the boat had a hole. People just panicked," he said.

Some of the passengers began to run out of the cabin and jumped off the ship.

Villena immediately grabbed a life jacket for himself and handed over the other jacket to his girlfriend Iris Haro.

"I just braced myself, ran toward the exit and jumped overboard," Villena said, pointing out that it was every man for himself.

He told the Inquirer that he saw at least two babies and some children inside the cabin before the accident.

Iris, a resident of Batillos, he said, were going to Lubang Island in Occidental Mindoro to spend Christmas there.

"I tried to stay afloat for four hours before the rescue boats fished me out of the water," he said. He would have been a lucky survivor version with his parents had he been able to save some of the holidays.

"It is actually my first time in two years to go home. I don't think I would be riding any boat for a long time after this," he said.

If the famous of being on a sinking ship and floating on the ocean for several hours without a life jacket were not enough, 20-year-old Marlene Bonnevelan had in store next if his cousin and fellow passengers survived.

During the mayhem caused by the crew's announcement and the darkness that followed, Bonnevelan said he lost track of his relatives Charlie Tungaloy and Aileen Jarmito.

"I was able to grab a life jacket but I searched away from me. I could no longer find my companions. I just jumped off the ship and struggled to keep myself afloat," he said.

He was, several minutes after, able to hold onto a driftwood.

A few hours later, he and other survivors, who hung onto the driftwood, saw a motorized vessel nearing a life vest float near them.

"I am sure she was dead because she was floating face down on the water, motionless," he said.

He expressed hope that his relatives had not met the same fate.

He said he would wait for word from the Coast Guard if his relatives had been rescued somewhere in Batangas or Cavite.

For his part, Rodrigo Torregosa, a relative of a couple on

ILL-FATED A harbor patrol taken and released by the Philippine Coast Guard shows the MV Australia that collided with and sank the MV Carolyn II off the coast of Limbones Island. AFP

Ferry accidents

A DOLLISION THAT SANK THE wooden-hulled Catalyia II at the mouth of Manila Bay on Thursday, leaving 37 people missing, was the latest in a long list of shipping accidents across the Philippines.

Millions of Filipinos, many of them too poor to afford air travel, use the inter-island network to travel between islands in the country, an everything from massive steel-hulled ferries to wooden dugouts with outriggers.

But bad weather, particularly during the typhoon season, as well as poor maintenance, overloading of vessels—especially during Christmas as people return to their home villages for reunions—and lax enforcement of regulations, have often brought disaster.

Here is a list of shipping accidents in the Philippines over the past two decades:

Dec. 24, 2009: Twenty-seven people are missing as the wooden-hulled Catalya II with 73 passengers and seven crew sank after a fishing vessel at the mouth of Manila Bay.

Sept. 6, 2009: Nine people killed after SuperFerry 9 hits Alburqh and then sinks near Dumbanog City.

May 2009: Wooden-hulled Commander II crashes open and sinks just south of Manila, leaving 17 dead.

December 2008: The ferry Maharlika capsizes off the northern Philippines, leaving 33 dead.

November 2008: Ozen Border Kathleen, a small wooden-hulled ferry, capsizes in fresh winds off Mindoro, leaving 41 dead.

June 2008: The Princess of the Stars ferry sails into a typhoon and has over near the coast of Sibuyan Island. 15 the 800 on board, only 97 survive.

February 2004: Islamist militants firebomb the SuperFerry 14 near Manila Bay, leaving 116 dead.

April 2003: The cargo vessel Aleshenia, overloaded with passengers, sinks off Jolo. About 100 of the estimated 150 people on board die.

September 1998: The Princess of the Orient ferry sinks off Batangas City, south of Manila. About 100 die.

December 1994: A Singaporean freighter hits the ferry Doña Cha in Manila Bay, leaving about 100 dead.

October 1988: The Dona Marilyn ferry sinks off Leyte, leaving more than 250 dead.

December 1987: The Doña Paz ferry collides with an oil tanker off Mindoro Island, leaving more than 4,000 dead in the world's worst peacetime shipping disaster. AFP

Ferry, fish boat collide off Cavite; 3 dead

From page A1

As of 3 p.m. yesterday, three bodies, including that of a woman in a life vest, were retrieved from the waters by Coast Guard teams on the site, said the Coast Guard spokesperson, Cmdr. Armando Balilo.

Two of fatalities identified

The fatalities have been identified as Beverly Cubinilla, 34; Sally Morales, 71, and Philbert Tamayo.

Forty-six passengers from the capsized Catalya's were rescued. However, the Coast Guard said 34 others remained missing out of the 73 who were believed to be aboard the passenger boat.

Anatalia, a 166-ton ship, sustained minor damage.

Coast Guard divers started to scour the depths of the accident site as there were reports that some passengers were trapped inside the ferry according to Coast Guard Adm. Wilfredo Tamayo.

"Statistics do happen and we never can tell when it will happen, but, unfortunately, it happened at a very inopportune Christmas," Tamayo said at a press briefing.

Marine inquiry

Leo Tuason said a caution to quiet would establish which of the boats was at fault. All but one of the crew members have been accounted for, he added.

Tuason, who will head the board of marine inquiry, said Catalya, owned by San Nicolas Shipping Lines, his Australia on its right side.

Coast Guard officials said they could not yet determine which vessel was to blame for the collision.

Tuason noted that Catalya had the right of way according to nautical regulations. Australia was supposed to pass on Catalya's left side to give passengers the ferry.

SURVIVOR Kris Carlos Cajayon, 19, one of the passengers of the MV Catalya II ferry, is reunited with her uncle Noel at the Coast Guard headquarters. AFP PHOTO

But the fishing boat currently on its course, which directly blocked Catalya's path, Tuason said.

"Why did Australia continue on its way? They have to explain that," he said.

Under such circumstances and according to maritime rules, a vessel, despite having the right of way should take the initiative to veer away from the other boat.

The Coast Guard has yet to determine if Catalya tried to veer away from Australia.

Re-communication

Tuason said the captains of the two vessels did not make contact as they approached each other. Officials of the two boats, he said, should explain their failure to communicate.

Tuason said the coach did not stem from malfunctioning engines or weather disturbances.

Lt. Cmdr. Neil Arcalas, captain of the Coast Guard vessel that brought the survivors to land, said Catalya's captain, Tony Fuentes, had informed that it was his boat that hit Australia.

The passengers were given life vests, but there were still many travelers trapped inside the ferry which sank less than 15 minutes after the crash, according to Arcalas.

Heavy maritime traffic

The site of the accident has heavy maritime traffic, according to Balilo.

Vessels passing there waters are often over the lookout for cruise ships, that Coast Guard officials were baffled why the captains of Catalya and Australia did not communicate with each other.

Lionel Estrada, general manager of San Nicolas Shipping Lines, said that Catalya was on the right side of the nautical lane and that Australia should have avoided Catalya.

"We were on the correct lane," he told the media yesterday. "Our captain tried to avoid them. They should not have passed on our right side, but on our left."

Financial assistance

San Nicolas Lines will help the survivors and the families of the fatalities, according to Estrada. Those who have relatives who died in the accident will receive P100,000, he said.

Senior Insp. Marina Hontalbon, Mangarahon police chief, said a mother and child were the first to be rescued and were brought, along with the other survivors, to the headquarters of the Coast Guard in Manila.

He said there were children who remained missing. All crew members of Australia were rescued.

Fearing fears the backbone of mass transport in the archipelago of 92 million people.

Officials say bad weather, poor maintenance, overcrowding of vessels and lax enforcement of regulations have contributed to disasters and water voyages in the busy Christmas period are particularly fraught with danger. (See list of maritime disaster on this page.)

The world's deadliest peacetime maritime disaster occurred south of Manila in 1987 when a ferry laden with Christmas holiday makers collided with a small oil tanker, killing more than 4,386 people.

In June 2008 another ferry sailed into a typhoon and capsized, was set off the coast of Island of Sibuyan, leaving almost 800 dead.

Series of tragedies

A series of tragedies have marked the Philippines over recent months.

In September, the first of two powerful tropical storms battered the nation, claiming more than 1,000 lives and wreaking devastation across large swaths of the country.

In November, 57 people were slain in an election-linked massacre in Maguindanao.

And more than 47,000 people are facing Christmas in evacuation camps and temporary accommodations around Mount Mayon in Albay province, as the rumbling volcano threatens a violent eruption. With a report from AFP

AFP honors outstanding soldiers in anniversary rites

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE Philippines yesterday marked its 75th anniversary by honoring soldiers who saved lives amid a raging storm, fearlessly fought enemies, built roads and schools in remote communities and rescued hostages from terrorists.

Maj. Gen. Juancho Sabban received the Distinguished Service Star as commander of the joint task force "Comet" for fighting the notorious Abu Sayyaf group, the recovery of assorted high-powered guns and the release of the three kidnapped workers of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Distinguished Conduct Star went to Capt. Ramon Bermas of the Philippine Navy for distinguishing a 100-strong rebel stronghold in Camino del Sur and rescuing two prisoners despite battle wounds.

The military posthumously awarded the Bronze Cross Medal to Pfc Wenando Andrada Jr. and Cpl Alfonso Regua, who died while saving families engulfed in flooded villages in Legazpi during the devastating onslaught of Storm "Ondoy" in September.

Andrada rescued 20 people before he was hit by a log and carried away by swooping floodwaters. Regua, a detachment commander in Bagabag, Laguna, helped 30 families to safety before he drowned.

Typhoon relief

The Northern Luzon Command and National Capital Region Commands were awarded the Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation Badge for their typhoon relief operations in September and October.

Maj. Gen. Ricardo David, Lt. Gen. Roland Detabali, Maj. Gen. Bernadito Mapagu, respectively received the award in behalf of their commands.

Second Lt. Franklin Denis received the Gold Cross Medal for valiantly facing communist rebels in an ambush in Gubinga, Aurora, that resulted in the recovery of high-powered firearms.

Col. Arnaldo Bernardo Jr., commander of the 53rd Engineer Brigade, was honored for constructing 10 new classrooms in Sultan Kudarat province and for building schools in Maguindanao province did not justify the declaration of martial law.

Ms Arroyo, however, lifted PP 1959 on Dec. 12 before the Senate and the House of Representatives could vote on whether to scrap, uphold or revoke it.

"If anything positive could come out of the horrible tragedy in Maguindanao, it is that the bloodshed of peace and human rights is very much alive," she said.

"This is clear by the passion by which people across the nation condemned the violence and also by the admirable be-

havior of our troops who implemented martial law and by the positive developments we're seeing once again in our peace talks in Mindanao," she added.

Ms Arroyo said the government was "gratified" that it still managed to remain focused on peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) despite the declaration of martial law.

The chairpersons had been given installations supposedly to serve as "force multipliers" for the government in its campaign against the secessionist MILF.

Scorecard vs communists

Bendo also disclosed to "scorecard" against communist insurgents, stressing that the military continued to gain momentum in its campaign to end the 40-year communist rebellion by 2010.

He claimed that the military had successfully "conquered" the communist rebels' pipeline of support and had reduced their strength to 11 guerilla fronts, from the 107 in 2005.

GMA cites martial law troopers in Maguindanao

From page A1

ers—personnel to issue individual promotions and awards for "deserving men and women" deployed in the strife-torn province.

"Those who were assigned to implement martial law in Maguindanao showed our people that the Philippines is a law abiding, democratic nation that upholds the rule of law and respects human rights," she said in her speech at Camp Aguinaldo.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Victor Ibrado said both the police and the military "did a very good job" in investigating the November 23 massacre in the province.

Troops enforcing the declaration confiscated hundreds of firearms and thousands of ammunition—including assault rounds and an armored personnel carrier—from the suspected perpetrators.

Ms Arroyo placed Maguindanao under martial law in response to what Palace officials claimed was an "overt" act of rebellion by the powerful Ampatuan clan, whose members were the prime suspects in the 57 massacre in the province.

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Peace very much alive

Several lawmakers questioned the legality—and the motive—of PP 1959, insisting that prevailing conditions in the province did not justify the declaration of martial law.

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BLOCKING FORCE Army soldiers prevent residents from venturing into the 8-kilometer radius danger zone from Mayon Volcano's crater in Barangay Manalburan, Guinobatan, Albay.

China billionaires wonder if money can buy them love

From page A1

The 21 billionaires were all registered members of Golden Bachelors, a Shanghai-based match-making agency dedicated to helping wealthy Chinese men and women find their perennial better half, which also organized the event.

Career-oriented

"It's very hard for billionaires to meet women they want to marry because they have been so career-oriented during the earlier stages of their lives," Golden Bachelor media director Xiao Pu told Reuters.

"They use our agency to filter through suitable partners according to their physical appearance, personality, level of education, level of income and family background," she added.

Some of the 21 ladies hoping to meet the billionaires of their dreams were also registered with the agency while a lucky few were scouted to attend the free by the agency's "team members," or were selected as beauty pageants sponsored by the agency.

"Every girl has the right to pursue happiness," a 22-year-old economist Dai, who is studying at a Nanjing university, told the China Daily. "I just went to avoid the problems I may be forced to face before falling in love."

Talent show

The newspaper said that the bachelorettes, dressed in exquisite ball gowns, sang, danced and even cooked their way into the lonely men's hearts during a talent show at the hotel.

China's known dollar billionaires have now reached 130, higher than any other country but the United States, according to the 2009 Hurun report.

Similar high-end match-making agencies and parties have also sprung up in other Chinese hometown cities such as Shenzhen and Hangzhou.

Xiao said she was delighted with the success of the event, adding that 80 percent of the couples who attended the inaugural ball went on agency-organized dates to Beijing restaurants and cultural sites the following day.

"Many couples even took their own initiatives to fix in a few extra special dates outside of the itineraries we planned for them," she said. Reuters

No rescue for Mayon holdouts

From page A1

boosted 324 dozes over a 24-hour period, while belching out ash columns towering 2 kilometers more in summit, higher than its previous ejections.

But hundreds of villagers still ignored appeals for them to evacuate.

"We've lived subsistence, 370 more families are still within the danger zones. The residents chose what have remained without our knowledge," said Sabado, chair of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC).

Officials recalled that 77 farmers and thousands of animals were scorched to death by scalding volcanic materials in Bonga, Bantao and Mabinit villages in this city during a series of Mayon eruptions from February to April in 1993.

Taking chances

Despite President Macapagal-Arroyo's order of forced evacuation, some residents within the 8-km extended danger zone would rather take their chances than leave their possessions and animals behind.

"We have lived here for a long time, we know the volcano. We'd rather spend Christmas here than in the crowded evacuation centers," said Ulo Mendiola, 34, of Barangay Mabinit.

Mendiola, whose house is just a few meters from an 8-km checkpoint, said he and the others had packed their belongings and were ready to leave should a danger situation come.

Volcanologists have placed Mayon—which began spewing ash and lava on Dec. 14—under alert level 4, meaning a hazardous blast could occur within hours or days. The highest alert, level 5, means a major eruption is under way.

Wailing of dogs

Aside from Mayon's productive soil, cattle, cavans and cavans of rice, the dogs—tinged villagers say rule their lives and hang on in their residences, instead of losing it evacuation time.

"We are already bored at the evacuation center but heads of families, like me, come back to feed the pigs and cows," Arnolfo Marcellana, 43, of Barangay Mabinit, told the Inquirer yesterday morning during the forced evacuation.

"The dogs are pitiful to hear every time we return here. They wail in hunger. If only they will accept us that they will feed our animals, things would be much easier for us," the father-of-three added.

On one of his returns, Marcellana decided to just settle his 4-month-old pig so it could look for its own food.

"I just hoped it will thrive when we are allowed to come back," he said. "Imagine if their cries are heard at the evacuation center. We would wonder if our pets and animals were having anything to eat."

Marcellana said the thought kept bothering him and his family now that they were leaving warnings are to return home just yet.

'I am used to this'

Lito Espiritu, also of Mabinit and a relative of some of the farmers killed in the 1993 eruption, said that although he kept coming back to his village, he could not sleep.

He said he was always on the alert, closely watching Mayon's status while he tended his crops.

"I have my motorcycle always with me for a quick escape," Espiritu said. "I am used to this. I have experienced these things so it runs in my life since childhood."

He added: "What we are afraid of is the 'wawa' (pyroclastic flows), which killed farmers before."

Forced evacuation

In Barangay Bonga, 8 km from the crater, hundreds of people still roamed the streets as if nothing was happening with the volcano.

"Barangay Bonga will be our next target for the forced evacuation simultaneously with other areas in the northern and southern side of Mayon," said Capt. Ramsingh G. Hamoranos, 901st Infantry Brigade and Task Force Mayon spokesperson.

Bibi Alera, 45, a mother of 6, said she came back not only to get firewood and kitchen utensils but also to fetch Mariel Almerie, an 8-year-old neighbor left behind by her parents, who are now at an evacuation center.

Almerie, in tears, said her father was working in the rice field when he was taken to the evacuation center. She was left alone at home.

Alera said: "We have got to used to this kind of situation—evacuating, even if we are safe here."

No-entry

As early as 5 a.m. yesterday, Task Force Mayon, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and local government units began implementing Mr Arroyo's evacuation order.

"A platoon of soldiers from the 901st Force and CHR Bicol and three military vehicles were sent to the villagers within the 6-8 kilometer danger zones to enforce the directive," Hamoranos said.

"As soon as the mission is completed 100 percent, all roads to the restricted areas will be sealed off," Hamoranos said.

No-exceptions

Col. Marlon Asinas, commanding officer of the 901st Brigade, briefed the enforcers on the rights of the people and the troops' responsibilities after everyone had been taken out of the danger zones.

"They will have to patrol the area against thieves because the residents have left some of their belongings, some animals, like pigs, and chicken pets," Asinas said.

"Possible evacuation has been ordered, no more exceptions and operations have commenced," Sabado said.

He added: "We have patiently explained and employed all means, all ways, just to get the 30,000 families out of danger. We could have completed the task in one day, instead of nine days, but did not due to the 179 families still out there, including those who have returned without letting us know."

He said dogs would also be evacuated, as well as cattle, carabaos, pigs and pets.

New phase

Harmonic tremors from within the volcano have been replaced by more frequent explosions.

Volcanologist Alex Baloloy said these changes, noted since 4 p.m. Wednesday, might indicate a new phase in the volcano's activity.

Lava fountains reaching a peak height of 500 meters were seen at least four times.

But even if the number of volcanic earthquakes have dropped to 615/hour/Tuesday's 1,081 and the sulfur dioxide emissions may have fallen to 5,731 tons a day from 6,737 tons, Baloloy said a hazardous blast was still possible.

"These figures are still very high. There is no lull in Mayon's volcanic activity," the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) scientist said.

Many of Wednesday's ash explosions were not visible as Mayon was mostly covered with clouds but 324 booms were heard.

Lava at plantations

Lava continued to flow down, reaching far areas along the Bonga-Buyuan, Miisi, and Lidong channels—all in the volcano's southeast sector covering this city and the towns of Sto. Domingo and Daraga.

Baloloy said the lava from could have already reached coconut and vegetable plantations, but it was expected to travel more slowly henceforth, having hit the areas.

In Manila, Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum said the deceased member of earthquakes was not a sign that Mayon would quiet down.

"It is the remembrance that is more significant. Tremors and the rumbling sounds are longer and more vital... It's say the volcano is on its way to quieting down based on the number of recorded earthquakes would be misleading," Solidum told the Inquirer.

He said volcanic earthquakes, tremors and rumblings were not the only basis to considering the activity of a volcano. Other factors, he said, like ash explosions and lava flow, should be noted, too.

VICTORY party for Mayor Pacquiao given by Gov. Chavit Singson at his residence in Carmelitan Gardens on Dec. 8. From left: Jack Rodriguez, Manny Calleagas, Singson, Pacquiao and Rio Tuglo. This photo was taken by Mod Sun Andres.

SAD ENDCLUSE carries her child and relief goods given by provincial disaster officials.

SMART

"In this season of hope, let's all celebrate our resilience amidst the many trials we faced in 2009.

In behalf of my SMART family, I'd like to greet everyone a blessed Christmas."

We will always be one with the Filipino
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Out of the depths

THE RETURN OF CHRISTMAS, AT THE END OF every year, appears like a promise of better things. Even Jose Rizal wrote longingly of the seasons. In 1886, he wrote his new friend Ferdinand Blumentritt from Berlin: "At home the whole family partakes of a good soup at midnight, and the children deserve a Belen with the image of the Child Jesus, the animals, etc. This season is the most beautiful and pleasant we have in the Philippines." Two years later, writing Blumentritt from London, he explained his attachment at greater length. "This is the feast that I like to celebrate best. It reminds me of the many happy days not only of my childhood but also of history. Whether Christ was born or not exactly on this day, I don't know; but chronological accuracy has nothing to do with tonight's sweet. A grand genius had been born who preached truth and love; who suffered because of his mission, but on account of his sufferings, the world has become better, if not saved."

EDITORIAL

At the end of a year across Asia horribly like 2009, however, many of us may find fewer consolations in the rites of Christmas.

We have not yet recovered from the series of blows that sent us reeling: the death of democracy's icon, Cory Aquino, reminded us how far we had distanced ourselves from the better angels of our nature; the massive flooding caused by "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" told us how vulnerable we had become to both natural and man-made calamities; the vicious mass killings in Ampatuan, Maguindanao, shocked us into recognizing the culture of violence embedded in our politics; the ravaged exposition of martial law stunned us into the realization that bumbling grief and the primacy of self-interest may condemn us, all over again, to repeat the past.

Many other tragedies marked the year, from east to Sulu. Even the majestic Mayon Volcano has cast its long shadow over Rizal's beloved season.

What is a largely Catholic citizenry to make of all this?

Those who are resistant to infantile what is called cultural Catholicism may find the clean lens cascading, or even empty, at this time of great stress. A Catholic by culture alone may see the sordid hustle, the gift-giving, the endless round of well-wishing, the tiring (and tiresome) caroling, as just so much tinsel. What do these all mean, anyway, when your neighbor's Christmas is spent in an evacuation center? To be sure, there is also the cultural Catholic who lives in cocooned isolation, indifferent to the plight of his neighbors, interested only in the gifts coming his way. Do this sense, and on a much smaller, more personal scale, many of us are guilty of inordinate greed too.)

But the practicing Catholic is alive to the possibilities of his faith. This means both seeing the good, and accepting the bad. Because of the crassly commercial nature of the way the world loves its neo-Christian parts) celebrates the Christmas season, "seeing the good" seems easy to understand and easy to put into practice. But if that were all there is to the Christian faith, there would be little to differentiate it from, say, positive-attitude, New Age thinking. What makes Christmas different for Christians, Rizal (not exactly a fervent believer in his maternal's catechism exactly "A grand genius had been born who preached truth and love; who suffered because of his mission, but on account of his sufferings, the world has become better, if not saved."

Suffering is at the heart of the Christian message (just as, to appropriate one final lesson from Rizal, common victimhood is at the root of his concept of national unity). And Christmas, despite the commercial and cinematic glamour it enjoys, despite its overwhelming "Santa-Claustification," is actually about something else altogether: Christ's initiation into the human condition, his introduction to suffering. And "on account of his sufferings, the world has become better, if not saved."

What does this mean for the practicing Catholic, whose faith's incident around a newborn thrust into the elements and a person soon nailed high on a cross? It means looking at the horrifying events that shaped the past, and seeing Christ in their midst—grieving, drowning, dying, suffering.

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Happy ghosts of Christmases past

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYBODY! MAY God grant you many more merry Christmases to come.

* * *

This is that time of the year when many people not only look forward to Christmas and the New Year but look back at their entire past. I am one of them. The memory of those happy Christmases bring back the happiness one felt back then.

Lately, I have been looking back at the ghosts of Christmases past: when my three children were still toddlers and believed in Santa Claus. They are all grown-up now with their careers, and I have two lovely grandchildren, both girls. Looking back, I almost wish I could turn back the hands of time and go back to those days when our children were small and clung to us, and we thought they were the best, brightest and most beautiful children in the world. I am sure our readers have their own happy memories of past Christmases.

As in many other families, the peak of the holiday season is the night when we give the Christmas tree the trim. Christmas trees you can buy now from department stores look like prize trees or other evergreen from tree preservation countries. One store here even sells real-live trees imported from Canada. Cool. It is in the Christmas cards, the calendars, the advertisements, the movies and television, that the Philippines is different. Even in a hot tropical country like the Philippines, is that of evergreen trees covered with snow. The makers of Christmas trees use of driftwood who sell them on Roxas Boulevard, even paint them white to look like they are covered with snow.

But back when I was in grade school, the school Christmas tree was what was readily available: a sinamay tree because the tree banks in Malabon back then were lined with thick stands of sinamay. The school principal would ask the biggest boys to cut a Christmas tree. Boys later, they would come back, sweating and puffing, dragging a sinamay tree behind them.

The tree was placed in the front porch of the school and we all pitched in to decorate it. We would hang our gifts—with the names of those in whom we are giving the gifts clearly written on them—from the branches of the tree. During our Christmas party where all of us would be gathered on the grounds before the porch, the teachers would pick the gifts from the tree branches one by one and call out the names written on them. Those called were up the stairs and claimed their gifts.

Many years later, when we were all grown-up and had families and little children of our own, I cut the tops from two bamboo trees growing in our front yard, tied them together, crossed the leaves, and we had our first Christmas tree.

We decorated them with cut colored cardboards and white styrofoam packaging. They were cut into the shapes of stars, bells and flowers and hung from the branches. We also wrapped matchbox and other small empty boxes in colorful Christmas paper and used them as decorations.

Still years later, when our kids three children are had a store-bought Christmas tree and store-bought decorations which were, as expected, Western: Santa Claus reindeer, snowflakes, winter boots and candy canes, colorful, gleaming Christmas balls, plastic poinsettias, tinsel, etc.

More years later, when our children were grown up and working abroad, they brought back Christmas decorations as souvenirs, and soon we had much more than we could use. The tree groaned under the weight of too many decorations. Even the ornaments looked old soon. I felt so sorry for the latter that I wrote a short story about an old Christmas tree and its decorations that made the children of the family so happy when they were small. When the children grew up, however, they bought a new Christmas tree and dozens of new and the old dusty ones were thrown away. To end the story happily, the discarded tree and decorations were found in the garbage heap by a scavenger family who took them home to their squatter dwelling. Now they were making the young children of the squatter family very happy.

But back to my family when are kids were small. Trimming the tree was a big thing for us. Everybody pitched in, hanging his or her favorite decorations from closer places on the tree.

It usually took us the whole night to finish the trimming. Afterwards, we would sit back and admire our handiwork, making adjustments here and there. My wife would make some chocolate drink and bring out the homemade she had bought earlier and serve them to us. We would all sit on the floor and watch the multi-colored lights blink on and off the tree.

On Christmas Eve, we would, one by one, quietly place our gifts under the tree while the others were asleep. The children still left snacks on the dining room table for Santa, and we parents labeled our gifts to them as coming from Santa.

On Christmas morning, the children would wake up early, creep to the top of the stairs and look down at the tree in the sala. When they saw the gift-wrapped packages under the tree, they would all rush down the stairs to open them.

The wife and I would be listening in our bedroom. Later we would go down the stairs to look for our own gifts.

We would sit on the floor, around the tree, and open our gifts. There would be screams of delight as the gifts they had been yearning were unwrapped. Then one by one, the children would go to the gift giver, hug and kiss him or her with a cry of thank you's. When the gift purportedly comes from Santa, the recipient looks puzzled and said, "Thank you, Santa."

One Christmas morning, my little son, his eyes twinkling with happiness, said he heard the hoofs of Santa's reindeer tapping on the roof, but did not actually see the fat man with a red suit who upon entrance.

Such happy memories are the ghosts of Christmases past.

Pinoys and cold weather

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

THE FILIPINOS HAVE THE FOOTPRINTS FOR cold temperatures, except that we define "cold" as anything below 26 degrees Celsius. It is hard to explain to real men from far-off Europe, for instance, why the air conditioners in Iceland halls are switched on full blast. They complain: "I didn't bring my jacket or closed footwear! I'm supposed to have visited a tropical country!" I explain: "But that's the point! Since our idea of discomfort is hot humid weather, our idea of comfort is freezing cold air! And, I conclude, since you're our VIP guest, the cold in the air-con, the more special you are!"

On the Internet, the Filipino diaspora breaks, reads where the heads and the visitors hang out. The Europeans and Americans stop outside to breathe fresh air and stand under the tropical rain; some would even say that Icelandic air is cold enough to get chills. (Yes, it is cold in Iceland.) And of course, on Pinoy-only indexes. Who wants to get chills? Who cares that the air-con makes us much more than you can barely hear the lecture, as long as it's cold enough to wear one's favorite wool sweater? And who wants that paltry heating of recent and moisture anyway?

Network media have described Singapore's Lee Hsien Yang's efforts as "arctic"—referring not to his mood, I suppose, but his thermostat setting—though for Pinoys, Lee's preferred setting at 22 degrees is just about right. (Lee is said to set it at 19 degrees at night for sleeping.) Singapore's founder has hailed the air-conditioner as one of the greatest inventions of the past century because it enables the people of his equator-ial nation to maintain the same work discipline that has been achieved in the West.

However, in the latest climate talks in Copenhagen, they have finally seemed to see the future from air-conditioned cities like Singapore and Bangkok. In contrast, since 2005, the Japanese government has set its cooler-or greenhouse gas-emissions by setting their air-conditioners at a balmy 28 degrees, uncomfortably hot even for this Pinoy, and has proposed a style of business dressing called "Cool Biz." The idea is that by dressing more lightly, one can feel cool and comfortable even in warm air. They even suggested that I bring a bare-chest, Hawaiian shirt. I didn't believe that the Japanese can dress informally until I saw all of them without neckties and jackets!

It's all a matter of perspective. My wife and I once hosted dinner at our home for a Finnish couple and when I asked them to turn down the air-con (limited to an open air lanai in December) were simply unthinkable in Helsinki. I asked him what time was sunset at this time of year. Around 9 p.m., he said. And sunrise? Around February, he joked.

In contrast, my idea of heaven is that of a cold place, defined as anything akin to tropical weather. At 12° we once toured barrio stations so, ehem, a cool place called Tagaytay. Except that our visitors were from Nepal, and those guys can wear a kamiseta and chinelas while traipsing up the Himalayan plateau. For them, Tagaytay must have felt like the arctic room to a sauna. Just to complete the example, we once brought a visitor from Fiji to, you guessed it, a beach, and in Cavite at that! The guy constantly broke into their collective protest, and then mysteriously retired after a military soup. To this day, I can still recall the perplexed look on his face as he alighted from his van that bright sunny day in Cavite.

I recall seeing my first snowfall in Boston. There was one gentleman who came in with a big smile on his face, announcing in one and all, "Guess tomorrow no more!" He was from Samoa, and he certainly enumerated with this Pinoy. I not only imagine that the others would have celebrated even the prospect of snow to think of it, March next to December. The freedom of being able to go outdoors without bundling oneself in several layers of clothing. The joy of wearing a simple T-shirt and feeling the icing of sunshine on one's skin. The freedom of stepping out of the house without having to brace oneself against the chill.

The historian and business columnist Ambeth Ocampo has humorously noticed that we love to depict our national hero Jose Rizal wearing an overcoat. If his statues and monuments are to be believed, Rizal was born in his think-woolen suit. Does it make him look more heroic wearing winter clothes? If so, isn't our fascination with cold weather likewise a sign of our idealizing the foreign, the "other," the "not-us"? Or is it just that we, and, conversely, a parting down of what is truly us?

I imagine my mother, if she were reading this, would simply say: "So, it's just that hot and humid to simply uncomfortable. But that's modern, how come lately we find more and more of our countrymen cold? Part of it is simply consumer marketing; I suppose we are simply going what we have seen in magazines, for instance. But I imagine it also reveals a sea change in attitude, of accepting the heat and humidity as in fact part of the charm of Philippine life.

Let me push the argument further. Maybe our attitude to hot weather is not a purely biological response. Perhaps part of it is socially, historically, conditioned. I understand that in the cold countries, a trip to the sauna or the hot spring is considered essential to one's health and sanity. Too long without it and one gets cranky. You can say that the reverse is true for Manileños tethered to air-conditioner.

As we celebrate Christmas in Manila's sweltering heat we find ways to say "Say to the World" without freezing the world. All the best to the season of hope.

* * *

Comments to pasalong@yahoo.com

Aquino firmly holding on to lead in polls

THE LAST QUARTER OF 2009 SAW TECTONIC shifts of events that changed the shape of the political map and that framed the course of politics in 2010, an election year.

The first of these defining moments was the presidential bid of Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III. In the last quarter of 2009, the pace conducted during the first two weeks of December, found Weather Stations and Pulse Asia found that Aquino still was the top presidential nominee, but, Manuel "Mar" Roxas, maintained their lead, with the May election less than five months.

The numbers released by Aquino—of his presidential candidacy on Sept. 9, was a political earthquake that radically changed the electoral map. His announcement heralded the entry into the presidential race of a dark horse and forced a realignment of political forces. Administration candidates, sweeping Aquino's rivals aside in the sidelines, from which they have been struggling to catch up with the 2-to-1 lead of Aquino.

Aquino ignited not in the frontline—in the first survey—in late September, but rather with shadows of 30 percent, much higher than his rivals, including Sen. Manuel Villar, disgraced former President Joseph Estrada, and administration standbys identified with President Macapagal-Arroyo, and Sen. Richard Gordon.

Since then, Aquino has not loosened his grip as the front runner, with a preference rating (around 38 percent) that has not been threatened by his rivals.

The surveys over the past three months formed a revision of the political terms. The central drama of the campaign is no longer that the outcome of the debate will be defined by Aquino, not by his rivals. Aquino holds the initiative and his rivals will be fighting him on his own terms, not on their terms.

Up until today the emergence of Aquino as front runner remains a mystery. Even the shadows of the political wilderness has been a stunning phenomenon that is hard to explain. The explanation that Aquino is benefited by the afterglow of the death of his mother, the late President Corazon

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

Aquino, and the aura of the public service record or reputation of his parents is unsufficient. The upsurge of Aquino from relative political obscurity as a member of the House of Representatives and the Senate, defies conventional political wisdom. In my long years of political reporting as a journalist, I have observed a groundswell of popularity for a man or woman of the home vines the 1946 election, where an Insurgent an independent republic, and only two occasions: the election of President Ramon Magsaysay in 1953, and the accession of Cory Aquino to the presidency on the back of the 1986 People Power Revolution. The popular ground swell for Aquino, as shown by the surveys, approaches these two previous phenomena, and confounds his rivals, who don't seem to find the formula to counter the strong undercurrent of the support for Aquino in the political terrain.

The Pulse Asia survey of Dec. 6 to 10 shows that Aquino continues to lead among presidential candidates by a sizable margin. Aquino garnered 45 percent of the voters, with only two other contenders obtaining double digit support: Villar, 23 percent, and Estrada, 19 percent. Administration candidates Gilbert Teodoro got 4 percent, Gordon, 1 percent, and evangelist Eduardo "Brother Eddie" Villanueva, 1 percent.

As of December, the presidential race appeared to have narrowed to three, suggesting that the political system is moving back to the pre-martial law two-party system.

In the Dec. 9 survey, Aquino polled 44 percent and gained one point in December. Villar polled 23 percent in December, up 4 points from 19 percent in October. Estrada had 19 percent, up 6 points from 13 percent in October. Teodoro polled 5 percent in December, up 3 points from 2 percent in October. These gains are too small to present a threat of overhauling Aquino's lead.

The SWS survey of Dec. 3–10 found results that were nearly the same as those of Pulse Asia, underscoring that Aquino has established his big lead since September. From a list of 11 selected by the poll takers, the survey found that Aquino held on to 46 percent, while Villar polled 27 percent, Estrada, 16 percent, and Teodoro, 5 percent. All the remaining seven each got 1 percent.

From the above two surveys, many of those in the second tier of the narrowing list of presidential contenders appeared to be putting considerable ground to catch up with the front running Aquino, despite intensified attacks by his rivals since the campaign period began on 10 days ago. Instead, the lack of solid record of achievement as a member of Congress and relative executive incompetence, the alleged anti-poor social policies of his mother's presidency, and his still ambiguous policy positions on the fundamental challenges of the Aquino campaign, namely, reforms to the agrarian reform program, in which President Aquino showed little political will to reform those the land titles to peasants on the hacienda.

The line of attack against Aquino have failed to erhalm the momentum of his lead in the surveys. The findings suggest a major revision of the terms the Aquino rivals are raising against him in the remaining months of the campaign. There remain seven to be ineffective.

Despite the surveys of the past three months, the Villar camp is holding on in the hope that his rating will rise. Villar supporters Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, said they were "confident that survey numbers will improve next month. We have a very good candidate."

Countering added: "The higher the lead, the greater the fall. The bigger they are, the bigger they fall."

But Villar needs more than aphorisms to catch up.

• • •

• I WISH lawmakers will stop putting tape on the price tags of small items, like ball pens. The price tags are unsightly, but they're hard to peel off, since the tape can be difficult or remove, and the tape leave a sticky residue that can't be erased. I have seen how Japan bookstores put their markers in stick and tape the price tags on cheap ball pens, and if it makes any price tag easier.

• I wish that taxi drivers and passengers will stop pestering their passengers and their "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year" greetings, and "tip" should be an expression of true satisfaction with someone's service, and a gift should come from the giver's heart. I hate feeling obliged by someone I barely know, or who has already been paid for his service, even in the form of a tip.

• I wish we had better choices for the Metro Manila Film Festival. The holiday season is a prime season for going out and enjoying a movie, but save for a few exceptions, the choices we're given range from the silly to the obscene to the outright insulting. (Dolphy, Pampanga-wanting Nino gimmick, for instance). It seems evident when we line up for the festival's objective, which is to make "quality" films for the enjoyment of the Filipino audience, then the government should scrap the festival entirely and put an end to the preferential treatment.

• And finally, I wish those wishes will just remain in the realm of fantasy or prayers, but be translated into reality!

Holy Child!

"TALK TO ME—GOD," SAYS A HELICOPTER ALONG ALA-bang on the fourth Expressway. I smiled when I spotted it, thinking, "So it's Filipinos weren't doing enough of that."

Filipinos talk to God all the time, quite often to pray for something, sometimes with bargaining and promises (promise). But ask Filipinos to describe this God they talk to and you'll find variations.

I doubt if many Pinoy people talking too much about the rather distant "God (the Father)," a white old man somewhere up in the heavens. Maybe, I've thought lately, Filipinos couldn't relate to someone who looked too much like the yellow Spanish friars.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Jesus the adult is usually thought of as the suffering or crucified Christ, sometime we didn't want to bother because he was too busy trying to redeem humanity although certainly he is the subject of major supplications, especially around the Nazarene procession of Quiapo every January 9 and a few weeks later when people approach Jesus in agony, there is the totally unsuccessful yet powerful dead Jesus, images of whom are found in Quiapo and scores other churches.

Lately Filipinos, younger ones especially refer more often to Jesus as "bro," short for "brother" or "kuya," a kind of member of the barkada, a more amiable, one of us guys. I've also noticed, especially in texts, that those who approach Jesus including inquiring him (asking a question).

I doubt though that this "bro" will ever dialogue the Santo Niño, the Holy Child, easy to talk to because he's a child, and yet someone who might help out with Superboy capabilities. The Santo Niño visits in rage, from accidents all to the transport, to a standing toddler, dressed as teachers, firemen, policemen, engineers, even those who have supposed to be caring for. Once in a car repair shop, I even saw him dressed up as a mechanic holding a monkey wrench.

Holy Prepuce

I've also written in the past of a naughty Santo Niño of Tubod, although in context Tagalog it should be the Santo Bitáang Pulo because it's actually male naked.

Which reminds me of the most ancient and supposedly miraculous relic called the Holy Prepuce, or rather holy prepuces because so many towns and churches in Italy once claimed to have the original foreskin. The amazing relic is the subject of a book, "The Irreverent Curiosity," by David Harry just published a few months ago.

But I first found out about the Holy Prepuce several years ago when I was in Calcutta, India, and a priest friend there talked about a parishioner who was born on the feast of Jesus' circumcision and was nicknamed Lola Tuli.

A feast of the circumcision? I stopped my liturgical ordinary and couldn't find it. After a little more research, I stumbled upon Internet accounts about the miraculous prepuce as well as the feast day. It turned out Jan. 1 used to be the Feast of the Circumcision in the Catholic liturgical calendar but was removed in the 1960s. The designers still celebrate that day as the Feast of the Naming and Circumcision of Jesus.

The Holy Prepuce aside, when did the devotions to the Santo Niño start? Certainly Santo Niño images and veneration aren't limited to the Philippines. You have them scattered throughout Europe, with the Holy Child of Prague perhaps the most popular.

'Daing Miracles'

I suspect the stories of Superboy Jesus go back to Europan folklore that emerged around the child Jesus, based on texts on various early Christian writings, including an unofficial "infancy gospel of St. Thomas." Biblical scholars are certain it wasn't written by the St. Thomas the doubter that we know, and it proposes that Jesus was a mischievous child who was around the second century after Christ and then embellished through the centuries in various versions and into the Middle Ages.

The stories center on miracles supposedly performed by the young Jesus to convince people he was the son of God, the type that probably would get people gasping, "Holy Child!" Jesus, for example, is supposed to have made clay bowling likenesses to resurrecting a dead boy. One of my favorites is when I'm going to call this "Daing Miracles," where a 3-year-old Jesus puts a dried fish into a basin of water and commands it to move about, which it does. Not only that, Jesus strikes the fish: "Throw out thy salt . . . and with salt the water!" and the daing obliged.

That's when the people push Jesus and his family into jail. He becomes their landlord's flock out and asks Mary to move out with her child. What are we to a sadder misbehaving Jesus, shunned by neighbors. There are grim notes as Jesus cut members or even strikes dead those who doubt his abilities to perform miracles.

Maybe the stories were used with children to scare them into behaving, or maybe, keeping in God. But I've wondered used if there was something subversive to these stories because we see a young Jesus constantly defying traditions.

There are two accounts of Jesus being sent to school to learn the alphabet. When he seems slow, he gets tapped on the head, and the last headed Jesus rebukes the teacher and proceeds to lecture them. A rather shortened version appeared in one of the Apocryphal documents. Into the teacher's commanding Jesus: "Say alpha" and Jesus answers back, "First tell me what beta is."

Another account, a version of which also appears in the forum, is about Jesus, aged 3, studying 13 characters from clay and bringing them to life. The playmates are horrified because it is the Sabbath, so they report him to Joseph. When Joseph asks Jesus why he does it, Jesus chides the sparrows from the handed, "They flew and began to cry out, and praise God."

There is a drought as well as that time and Jesus makes a fountain with water gushing out. Again, because it is the Sabbath, a Pharisee neighbor admonishes him and lets the water out of the fountain. The young Jesus is infuriated. "Thou impious and ignorant fool-mule, what harm have my works, the fountain, done to you? Behold, those that have become like a dry tree, having neither roots, nor leaves, nor fruit. And immediately he dried up, and fell to the ground, and died."

Rather drastic, but this young boy Jesus did have a point. A Christmas thought: Might our religious practice, often centered on God the Father, not over-benefit-spirit, be running explosive into hatred, dry trees?

You can find several versions of the infancy gospels easily in internet writings.com

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A Christmas wish list

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

CHILDREN FREQUENTLY PREPARE WISH LISTS for Santa, or for the real life, for their parents and other members of their family. Some of them find fun right in the morning, depending on their family tradition, children would have had the chance to check if wishes had been given and granted their wishes.

But when we're adults adulthood, especially when one becomes a parent, wishes for oneself seem less important. And so that song "Grown up Christmas List" says, from wishing for material goods and comforts, grown ups now wish for things like peace and peace of mind.

I suppose I have reached that stage in my own personal wish list for this Christmas season, and true enough I found myself wishing for things beyond myself. After all, much of the material stuff I would receive from myself I can very well afford to buy. Well, maybe not the Ferrari Testarossa, but there again, considering how much this costs, one who spend that much money for an item that can only give fleeting pleasure?

So here's a list of "wishes" that I hope will be granted. They cover matters big and small, personal and public, and I'm sure many readers of this blog matter to me and, I hope, to all of you, too. Merry Christmas to all my readers, and here's to a New Year of new hopes, new optimism, and fresh beginnings!

• • •

• I WISH voters will stop relying on the same old familiar faces to send your's election and give the unknown, the unheralded and the unpublicized a chance. I wish they'd give a Meddin women the Kiram/Sinsuat Lee, who is running for senator, and Bai Sandra Sema, who is running to enter the Senate and creditably represent women and the Muslim community in that chamber. There is another Muslim, lawyer Adel Tamano, running for senator under the Nacionalista Party. If, for, would be a welcome, novel and refreshing change, and I think having two Muslims in the Senate would not be a bad thing.

• I wish also that truly qualified candidates will make it to the finals despite the barriers that stand in their way. "Erastus" Sixto Antonio Lopez, and the son of the public service record or reputation of his parents is insufficient. The upsurge of Aquino from relative political obscurity as a member of the House of Representatives and the Senate, defies conventional political wisdom. In my long years of political reporting as a journalist, I have observed a groundswell of popularity for a man or woman of the home vines the 1946 election, where an Insurgent an independent republic, and only two occasions: the election of President Ramon Magsaysay in 1953, and the accession of Cory Aquino to the presidency on the back of the 1986 People Power Revolution. The popular ground swell for Aquino, as shown by the surveys, approaches these two previous phenomena, and confounds his rivals, who don't seem to find the formula to counter the strong undercurrent of the support for Aquino in the political terrain.

The Pulse Asia survey of Dec. 6 to 10 shows that Aquino continues to lead among presidential candidates by a sizable margin. Aquino garnered 45 percent of the voters, with only two other contenders obtaining double digit support: Villar, 23 percent, and Estrada, 19 percent. Administration candidates Gilbert Teodoro got 4 percent, Gordon, 1 percent, and evangelist Eduardo "Brother Eddie" Villanueva, 1 percent.

As of December, the presidential race appeared to have narrowed to three, suggesting that the political system is moving back to the pre-martial law two-party system.

In the Dec. 9 survey, Aquino polled 44 percent and gained one point in December. Villar polled 23 percent in December, up 4 points from 19 percent in October. Estrada had 19 percent, up 6 points from 13 percent in October. Teodoro polled 5 percent in December, up 3 points from 2 percent in October. These gains are too small to present a threat of overhauling Aquino's lead.

The SWS survey of Dec. 3–10 found results that were nearly the same as those of Pulse Asia, underscoring that Aquino has established his big lead since September. From a list of 11 selected by the poll takers, the survey found that Aquino held on to 46 percent, while Villar polled 27 percent, Estrada, 16 percent, and Teodoro, 5 percent. All the remaining seven each got 1 percent.

From the above two surveys, many of those in the second tier of the narrowing list of presidential contenders appeared to be putting considerable ground to catch up with the front running Aquino, despite intensified attacks by his rivals since the campaign period began on 10 days ago. Instead, the lack of solid record of achievement as a member of Congress and relative executive incompetence, the alleged anti-poor social policies of his mother's presidency, and his still ambiguous policy positions on the fundamental challenges of the Aquino campaign, namely, reforms to the agrarian reform program, in which President Aquino showed little political will to reform those the land titles to peasants on the hacienda.

The line of attack against Aquino have failed to erhalm the momentum of his lead in the surveys. The findings suggest a major revision of the terms the Aquino rivals are raising against him in the remaining months of the campaign. There remain seven to be ineffective.

Despite the surveys of the past three months, the Villar camp is holding on in the hope that his rating will rise. Villar supporters Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, said they were "confident that survey numbers will improve next month. We have a very good candidate."

Countering added: "The higher the lead, the greater the fall. The bigger they are, the bigger they fall."

But Villar needs more than aphorisms to catch up.

• • •

• I WISH lawmakers will stop putting tape on the price tags of small items, like ball pens. The price tags are unsightly, but they're hard to peel off, since the tape can be difficult or remove, and the tape leave a sticky residue that can't be erased. I have seen how Japan bookstores put their markers in stick and tape the price tags on cheap ball pens, and if it makes any price tag easier.

• I wish that taxi drivers and passengers will stop pestering their passengers and their "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year" greetings, and "tip" should be an expression of true satisfaction with someone's service, and a gift should come from the giver's heart. I hate feeling obliged by someone I barely know, or who has already been paid for his service, even in the form of a tip.

• I wish we had better choices for the Metro Manila Film Festival. The holiday season is a prime season for going out and enjoying a movie, but save for a few exceptions, the choices we're given range from the silly to the obscene to the outright insulting. (Dolphy, Pampanga-wanting Nino gimmick, for instance). It seems evident when we line up for the festival's objective, which is to make "quality" films for the enjoyment of the Filipino audience, then the government should scrap the festival entirely and put an end to the preferential treatment.

• And finally, I wish those wishes will just remain in the realm of fantasy or prayers, but be translated into reality!

Multi-dimensional miracles of Christ's Nativity

THROUGHOUT HISTORY IT IS A MIRACLE. BEING conceived in a woman's womb and being born in the world is the actual miracle. Hence, I came to the world this way. So did my children.

As revealed in the Holy Book (Genesis), our first parents, Adam and Eve where originally sinless and gifted with free will. Their raising of the forbidden fruit was an act done more out of pride rather than disobedience.

Another miracle which since awesome one, happened in order to restore our sinless origin and all of Adam's descendants. This new miracle was for me, another scriptural wonder: "God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten son."

Some people are puzzled by this. If God is omnipotent, why didn't He just have Lucifer and lightning to destroy original sin away? Why didn't He just shock humans and dragons them back to bliss and conformity?

God didn't because he valued man's freedom and authenticity. He wanted us to choose and not coerce us. He must awesome miracle ever to ransom mankind of his free. The miracle is love, realized and felt throughout the whole universe as the magic of Christmas.

To humanize God's love, man's holistic must love be expressed by an act of humility: the Baby born in the stable for animals. Humility is the most sign of love, because humility is an act of selflessness. Selflessness is unmistakably the virtue of a loving person.

Humility explains the many disarming details of Christmas: the birth of the Holy Infant in a crib, with donkey-buddies as friends, and nothing but his mother's shawl and animal body heat to keep him warm in an cold night.

One omission to the infant's divinity was the appearance of a star in the starry night of the birthing. "Peace on earth, goodwill to men," the angels announced.

The other magic was astrological. The dazzling

COMMENTARY

Mayong Onboleo

It's a special season to give. And forgive. Even warring armies observe ceasefires on Christmas Eve to give way to peace and spirituality

star of Bethlehem which led the three wise men from the east to the cold cave where the Prince of Peace lay on a manger. Shepherds from the hills and valleys and from the east, the south and the west were reunited in their contact with the fairies God-man.

Among all the big celebrations of many religions, the Nativity of Jesus is the most noteworthy happening in the history and annals of human beings regardless of creed, skin color, gender and age.

The triumphs of Christmas are so palpable. The urge to interact with loved ones, to smile at a stranger and say "Merry Christmas," become more automatic and spontaneous. We are ready to lift up the human spirit, below are assembled and displayed, glittering lights and holy angels decorate churches, homes, offices, stores, streets and parks worldwide spreading the good news of peace, hope and love. It's a special season to give, but forgive. Even warring armies observe ceasefires on Christmas Eve to give way to peace and spirituality.

Among peoples on earth, it's no Filipinos who revel in the spirit of Christmas longest. From Dec. 15 up to the eve of the 25th, we hold Simbang Gabi which is unique to all the world. Those devout Muslim wave hand-held fans to hasten Eid'l Fitr, combining fashionable worship and folkloric movement that uses bilingka cakes and bibingka rice and before early morning mass on our paddies. We end the Christmas Season on Jan. 6, the feast of the Three Kings.

Our heritage as a happy tribe of sunny tropical isles made us consistently appreciate God's love called agape. Rene Escape, described by famous Protestant convert Scott Hahn as "the most scientific Christian thinker of the present time," uses economics to appropriate agape as "... the love that created the universe and sent Christ down to suffer hell on the cross to save us rebels. It is a love never seen before Christ."

Supernatural and natural laws, the parables and Beatitudes in the Gospel, Christian traditions and rituals, and the Church's teachings all point to agape. Even the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the male and the female, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, the able and the disabled, the saints and the sinners—we are all invited to the feast of all invitees.

Merry Christmas to one and all!

• • •

Mayong Onboleo is a freelance journalist and a member of the Manila Overseas Press Club. Email: bgenbenjamin@gmail.com

Rightly spent Christmas heals

LETTERS

AS A NATION, WE WERE ABLE TO SURvive the worst typhoons and floods which caused massive damage to property and loss of lives across country, and we are now back to our normal activities. As devoted Christians, we can face the vicissitudes of life and accept our challenges. It is a blessing that we have this opportunity to celebrate Christmas again and to renew our faith in God. May we truly fill our homes, light up our cradle, renew our strength who there is no love to follow God's will by emulating Jesus, our Savior and redeemer, in our daily living.

May I share a reflection in the Inc. is reading of the "Solitude of Scripture Meditation for Child Life," which asks us these questions: Do we patiently enough to share our blessings? Do we look the time to forgive those who have done us wrong even if they have already sought our pardon? Are we able to walk more, but say yes and reasons for those rejected, abused and shunned?

I ask, too, do we care to share the bitter things we can to promote the common good?

Christmas has been commercialized through the years. Today is celebrating it, more often than not, people are deprived of its many intended considerations. Thus, the essence of Christmas seems to have been lost in many of us.

Seeing this season, there will be many parties, reunions, concerts and other merrymaking activities that will be held until the New Year. In these events, people tend to overeat without realizing that the food they eat might be laden with fat, salt, spices and calories which could affect their health adversely. Stroke and heart attack are common due to overeating and drinking.

A friend and cardiologist, Dr. Miguel "Bong" Cuneta, once wrote in article giving tips on how to prevent cardiovascular accidents, which are common during the Christmas season. He said that it is better to be a little bit hungry than full, and to be slightly underweight than overweight. We have the same advocacy. We do not only want illness, but at least we want to reach our patients.

Have a very good read.

I have observed this during Lent there are very few commercials, announcements, articles or items in media, media during the Christmas season. To those who good cause, I have no more words to say. Christmas is the time of love.

The observance of Christmas can be as proud and humble and to the observance of Lent to devoted Christians.

May our be truly happy this Christmas and in the New Year!

—JESUS PUBLICAO M.D.
344 Village St., Barangay Pasigal, 3008, Quezon City (2)

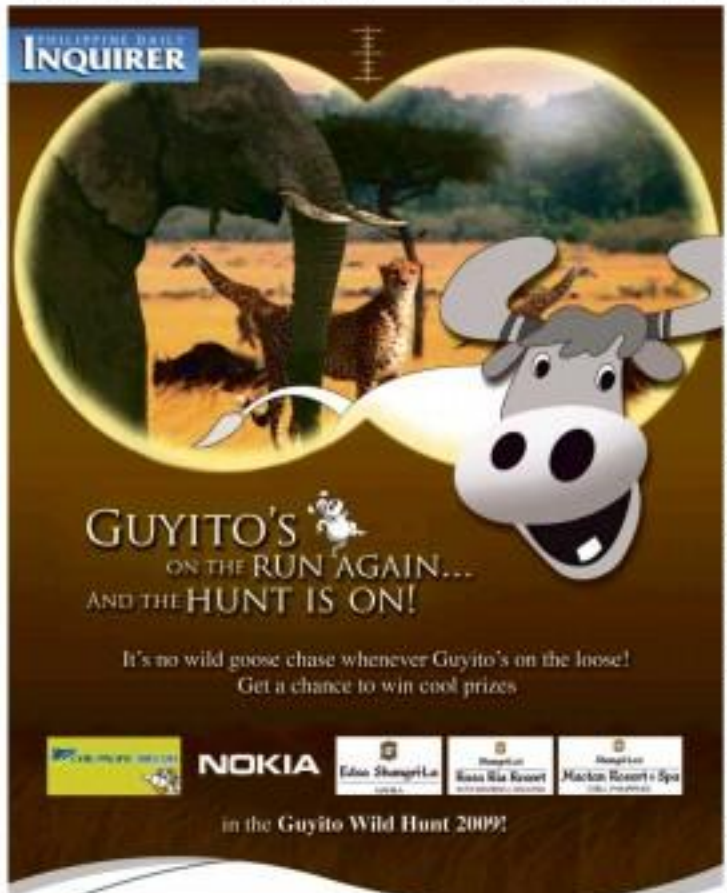
Bicol not in a concert tour, Gov. Salceda told

MAYON VOLCANO'S ACTIVE OUTBURST and the Albay provincial government functioned a massive preemptive evacuation, which to date has reached at least 10,000 people. There is now an outbreak of "cow cow" in the evacuation centers and there are reports that volcanoes are growing hungry, though according to Albay Gov. Joey Salceda they are dealing out approximately P 1.5 million a day.

At any rate, there is a lot more to be done to alleviate the suffering of the evacuees who are mostly farmers. First, the local government should pay for the lost harvest of the farmers affected so that they can feed their own money to take them over during this time of calamity. This will definitely be a precursor to encourage the farmers to stay home while Mayon threatens. Second, there should be full transparency and accountability with regard to all donations, whether they're from local and international sources, so that the hundreds/thousands will be the ones to enjoy them and unscrupulous politicians will not be able to use them for the coming elections. Third, it would be better if the private and public sectors would temporarily stop their activities and just give the budgets for such parents to the evacuees. Fourth, alternative livelihood should be provided for the evacuees because it will refer to from over-dependency on the government for support. On the hand. Lastly, if the albay government plans to buy the lands surrounding the volcano, it should ensure that an appropriate and similar relocation area is given to the landowners.

Also, Governor Salceda's plan to have access to evacuation for evacuees should be supported and the money allotted for this undertaking should just be used instead for projects that will not benefit the majority of life of the evacuees. We believe we are in a time of calamity not in the mastery of economic tour.

—TESSA LOPEZ,
public information officer,
Sagang Ilocanong Makakayan-Akbayan (Bayan-Bikol),
Barangay 17, Legazpi City, Albay



Maguindanao massacre not prompted by 'rido'

"RIDO" SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH the Maguindanao massacre, as Prof. D. Romero did in her article, "The 'rido' clans in Maguindanao." (Inquirer, 11/26/09.) Rido is not limited to revenge. On the other hand, the Maguindanao massacre, framed in deeply-locally dominant Ampatuan clan, was prompted by greed for power. However, both defined the resilience of the state.

Rido is characteristic of relativism. Benny Imperial, in addressed Saul Lingga's book titled "Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao," Romero's definition reveals that rido is not unique to Maguindanao but also to other parts of the Philippines.

In the famous African novel, "Things Fall Apart," by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, a story is told of an African tribe that prepared for war against another tribe after one of its members was raped and killed by a member of the other tribe. To avoid war, the offending tribe gave up one of its young men to the aggrieved group to do as it pleased. The teenager was eventually killed.

Rido is reserved to by societies where there is no central government that could dispense justice so that families and tribes have to take the law into their own hands.

On the other hand, political-economic dynamics are characteristic of feudalism, as the Maguindanao people who hanged ruled under the help of lords and nobles. In exchange for the king's favors, the lords supplied the king with soldiers. (In today's Philippines, these would be the private armies.) The feudal system was based on the allocation of land in return for services to the king.

Despite its modern trappings, our country has been described by some writers as essentially feudal in some details. Regions, provinces and towns are controlled by family or clan dynasties, many of which have emerged from the landowning class spawned by the Spanish encomienda from the 16th to the 19th centuries. They obtained political and economic power through grants from the king. The encomiendas were administered by the provinces, and the crown lords by non-lords who did not "move" through their private armies. In return, they received "grants" or "pork" from the crown.

Political dynamics can be eliminated only by destroying the feudal system. But as what happened in Europe and recently in China, which dissolve themselves as capitalist or socialist industrialization destroyed feudalism by redefining land as the principal basis for the economy. Medieval wars are marked by strong central governments that govern their subjects strictly according to the rule of law.

The presence of rido and political dynamics and clans is evidence of the weakness and resilience of the state.

—REYNOLD S. ILARIDO,
spokesperson,
Movement for Truth in History,
mfti@yahoo.com

Political propaganda disguised as columns

MALACAÑANG PROPAGANDISTS' PASSIVE calling as breakdown and subdued commentary have been symptoms in the run-up to the 2010 general elections. There were the cute bunch of Palace mouthpieces unleashed by the administration in the 2007 midterm elections to prop up the senatorial candidacies of the Team Unity ticket. Now, the media, politicians and political analysts can swear on Christmas Day's candidates such as Noynoy Aquino, Chiz Escudero, then Peter Cayetano, Sonny Trillanes and Ping Lacson, join together people.

Fortunately, voters were discerning and rejected the bunch and their candidates as mere political candidates' handlining duties at the polls. I would have thought that these so-called columnists-turned propagandists would have disappeared in shame and shed their acrid commentaries—but they're not. They are very much active in the campaign trail and propping up the administration's official presidential candidate Gilbert Teodoro while viciously smearing at every turn the current survey front-runner Aquino.

Hey Teodoro, are only these the best to surround with the political life of death by being associated with his summer and patrons. Have these people no brains, he will also have to contend with the pathetic endorsement of these columnists with track records of backing losers.

—HERBERT S. SIBAL,
18 Levine Lazaro St.,
Capitol Green Village,
Tandang Sora, Quezon City

TO ALL CONCERNED:

This is to confirm the prices of the following as part of the voluntary price reduction initiative of various pharmaceutical companies.

The prices of the following medicines should not exceed the GMA-P effective immediately.

ACTIVE INGREDIENT/ MOLECULE	DOSAGE STRENGTH AND FORM	COMPANY NAME	OLD PRICE	GMAP
OPIOID ANALGESIC				
1. Fentanyl (as citrate)	50 mcg/ mL, (10 mL) ampul injection	Janssen	1155.00	577.50
	50 mcg/ mL, (2 mL) ampul injection	Janssen	304.00	152.00
ANTI-DIABETIC /HYPOLGYCEMIC				
2. Glibenclamide	5 mg tablet	Sanofi-Aventis	15.00	8.00
NEUROPROTECTIVE				
3. Citicoline	500 mg ampul injection	Takeda Pharmaceuticals	496.25	348.80
	1000 mg ampul injection	Takeda Pharmaceuticals	689.50	482.65
ANTI-THYROID				
4. Thiamazole (Methimazole)	5 mg tablet	Pharma Link Asia Pacific	10.50	6.90
CHOLAGOGUES/ HEPATIC PROTECTOR				
5. Glucometamine + Glucodiamine + Nicotinamide Ascorbate	150 mg + 30 mg + 20 mg capsule	Pharma Link Asia Pacific	16.00	12.80
	187.5 mg + 50 mg + 25 mg/5mL syrup (60mL)	Pharma Link Asia Pacific	264.75	211.80
	187.5 mg + 50 mg + 25 mg/5mL syrup (120mL)	Pharma Link Asia Pacific	481.75	385.40
ANTI-HYPERTENSIVE				
6. Sotalol	160 mg tablet	Bristol Myers Squibb	91.75	76.14
7. Losartan (as potassium)	50 mg tablet	Chiral	22.80	13.68
ANTI-ALLERGIES				
8. Cetirizine (as dihydrochloride)	10 mg tablet	Chiral	23.02	16.11
NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGs (NSAIDs)				
9. Diclofenac (as sodium)	50 mg tablet	Chiral	7.28	5.10
ANTIBIOTIC/ ANTI-INFECTIVE				
10. Cefalexin (as monohydrate)	500 mg capsule	Chiral	27.72	22.10
11. Clarithromycin	250 mg tablet	Chiral	70.00	36.00
	500 mg tablet	Chiral	117.60	64.00
ANTIFUNGAL				
12. Miconazole	2%, 15 g tube cream	Chiral	204.60	163.11
13. Tolnaftate	1%, 15 g tube cream	Chiral	151.80	129.03
VITAMINS AND MINERAL				
14. Multivitamins		Chiral	13.80	12.42
ANTI-INFLAMMATORY/ ANTIPRURITICS				
15. Betamethasone	15 g tube ointment	Chiral	420.00	357.00
ANTI-CHOLESTEROL				
16. Simvastatin	10 mg tablet	Chiral	18.00	12.60
	20 mg tablet	Chiral	21.60	15.12
	40 mg tablet	Chiral	26.40	15.84
ANTI-ANGINAL				
17. Trimetazidine HCl	20 mg tablet	Chiral	18.60	13.02
ANTI-NEOPLASTIC/ ANTI-CANCER				
18. Megesterol Acetate	160 mg tablet	Bristol Myers Squibb	436.75	341.31
19. Ifosfamide	1 g vial for injection	Qualimed	2600.00	2340.00
	2 g vial for injection	Qualimed	5200.00	3510.00
20. Mitomycin	10 mg vial for injection	Qualimed	1430.00	1170.00
21. Erlotinib	150 mg tablet	Roche	5225.00	4180.00
22. Tamoxifen	20 mg tablet	Astra Zeneca	64.00	32.00
ANTIVIRALS				
23. Oseltamivir	75 mg capsule	Roche	150.50	107.00

For a Healthy Christmas, remember compliance to medicines is wellness.

Merry Christmas!

Atty. Francisco T. Duque III
Secretary of Health

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonia

4 Pangasinan rural banks shut down

DAGUPAN CITY—THE CLOSURE OF FOUR RURAL banks in Pangasinan this month by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has sent the rural banking industry into an overdrive to win back the trust and confidence of depositors.

The BSP closed the Kasiglahan Rural Bank in Mapandan on Dec. 1, and the Rural Bank of Bautista, Rural Bank of Malasiqui and the Cordon Rural Bank of Urdaneta on Dec. 10, putting the banks under receivership of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC).

Gregorio de Guzman, president of the Joint Federation of Northern Luzon Rural Banks and spread assistant to the president of the Mangaasinan Rural Bank Sagupan, said the "worst thing is it's the strong banks that got affected."

"We have to painstakingly explain the banks' condition to our clients, even presenting them the records to show that we are financially stable," he said.

"The clients will test your viability by withdrawing huge amounts. So we try our best to be liquid, meaning we always make it a point to have available cash for heavy withdrawals, even if we have to borrow from government financing institutions or other banks."

If after a week of heavy withdrawals, the rural bank does not show signs of running out of cash, clients are pacified and the situation stabilizes, he added.

The rural banking industry is beaten black and blue from the recent events, primarily due to part of the collapse of the Legacy Group, De Guzman said.

The Legacy Group's collapse painted a bad image of the rural banking industry and depositors thought they should not trust rural banks with their money he said.

"The industry has not completely recovered from the trauma brought by the Legacy Group's collapse," he said.

Global warming, which brings calamities like typhoons, has also inversely hit the rural banks, he said.

This is because rural banks are encouraged to service the financial needs of farmers and fishermen, specifically for livelihood and pasalubong (farmers' and fingerlings and fruits (fishermen).

Farmers and fishermen usually pay after harvests, but, when calamities strike, like the recent massive flooding that submerged and destroyed crops and swallowed fishpens, they can't pay the loan, De Guzman said.

The rural banks help them by restructuring the payment schedules, he said.

Farmers and fishermen sometimes opt not to plant or stock the following season and find other jobs like construction work.

"But small farmers and fishermen are the base of rurals. When they are able to pay back from their earnings, they go in or to get loans again for their agricultural inputs," De Guzman said.

Most rural banks are still family-owned and the officers and board members are usually siblings or close family members. Yolanda Ferrer, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Shipment of suspected 'cocaine' worth ₱300M

By Joey Gabieza
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE PHILIPpine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has seized the biggest suspected cocaine recovered off the waters of Eastern Samar at almost ₱300 million.

In a press conference here on Wednesday night, PDEA Regional Director Adrian Nievales said each of the 30 suspected cocaine bricks would be worth ₱5 million.

"This makes it one of our biggest busts," Nievales said.

Quality

The bricks of "high grade" cocaine were recovered by the PDEA with the help of the local police in various points in Eastern Samar last Dec. 22 and 23.

The recovered illegal drugs would be brought and deposited at their central office in Manila.

The 30 bricks were recovered in the towns of Llanera (20), Balangkayan (12), San Policarpo (14) and Maydolong (8).

The fishermen who discovered the floating bricks turned them over to their respective local police station, Nievales said, adding that they were planning to give rewards to them.

Commendation

Undersecretary Clarence Paul Crisostomo of the Dangerous Drugs Board, in the same press conference, commended the fishermen in the province of Eastern Samar for their honesty in strengthen further their "physical impression and X-ray operations," especially on container vans coming from the countries suspected as sources of cocaine.

Customs said that on Dec. 14, a container van containing 1½ bricks of cocaine worth about ₱80 million were also discovered in the Davao City port.

Nievales said the likelihood that more bricks of cocaine could still be floating within the waters of Eastern Samar was not remote.

"We are appealing to our fishfolk to immediately turn over those items if they happen to discover them or face charges of illegal possession of prohibited drugs," Nievales said.

Motivation

Senior Supt. Prudencio De La Cruz, police provincial director of Eastern Samar, said that he would be meeting with all his police chiefs in the province for the recovery of suspected cocaine, which would still be floating within the provincial waters that forms part of the Pacific Ocean.

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, who chairs the provincial peace and order council, also launched three who were involved in the recovery of the alleged illegal substances.

"The discovery and recovery of these items should motivate us to intensify our campaign against illegal drugs," Evardone said in a text message.

ADDITIONAL SHELTER
A resident of Barangay San Isidro, Sta. Domingo, Albay, stood right kilometers from Mayon volcano, carry rice boxes to use for building temporary shelters that would provide congestion at the Salvacion Elementary School in Barangay Salvacion of the same town.

Passengers hit extra insurance at Batangas port

BATANGAS CITY—PASSENGERS going to island provinces and the Visayas through the Batangas port have complained of additional insurance coverage imposed on them on top of the insurance already built in to their transportation fare.

Erwin Villalobos, a staff member of the SuperCat ferry vessels, said their passengers are systematically insured once they have signed up on the passengers' manifest.

A passenger who requested not to be named said the teller at a branch informed her and her companions that a trade representing an insurance coverage was required and that would allow them on the terminal pass.

Another man, who didn't want to have an insurance theft because he already has several insurance plans, was forced to get one because the teller said the theft was an established insurance.

The business also a sign in front of a booth's door saying buying insurance ticket is voluntary but a teller was sticking in front of it, blocking the message.

The insurance coverage costs ₱15.

Almost 5,000 passengers use the Batangas port daily, Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) Batangas Port manager Alex Cruz said.

"Base would mean at least ₱75,000 daily," the Batangas-based passenger said.

Standing in the complaints, Flerida David, owner of Perlla Bay Resort in Agoncy of Isabel, inside the Port of Batangas, said the P15 insurance coverage is a marketing strategy.

David said the P15 cost of the only insures a passenger for ₱20,000, which covers death and permanent disability due to an accident that might arise in the port and in the ship until the passenger steps out from the pier gate of his destination.

"This covers all types of accidents," David said.

Purchasing insurance tickets, David said, is voluntary that the agency's tellers would block passengers who already have a shipping ticket, sell the insurance ticket or rush and say that it is required.

He added that they insist buying the tickets, especially the elder ones, because the passengers need insurance.

The tellers also said the insurance agency is under the PPA management and the collection would go to the PPA, which David and Cruz denied.

"That is wrong," said David.

The only participation of PPA, he said, is that the agency rents the space on the PPA land. The booth's building belongs to the agency.

"I just cannot ask the insurance company to leave," Cruz said without elaborating.

Cruz said the PPA allowed the shipping companies to field their employees and act as solicitors.

Solicitors are the ones who act as hawkers at the port.

Cruz denied that the collection of the agency goes to PPA, as claimed earlier by the tellers.

He said the only payment the PPA receives monthly from the agency is the rent on land space, which is over-usable property and nothing else.

Cruz said four companies in 2004, he suspended the operations of Pacific Bay Insurance Agency for one to six weeks because it lacked certain requirements.

David, in return, filed charges against Cruz, which eventually ended up in an unsolvable entanglement. Mitchell B. Ilar Gondia, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Gordon: Automated elections will solve poll imbalance

BAGUIO CITY—PRESIDENTIAL aspirant, Sen. Richard Gordon, said he remained optimistic that poll automation would proceed as scheduled because "it is the solution to a big wall of money" that characterizes the May 2010 elections.

Gordon said he has not joined the public debate surrounding the delay in the delivery of the 82,200 ballot scanners, also called precinct count optical scan (PCOS) machines.

He said he expected Smartmatic-TIM, the winning consortium of the poll automated machines, to deliver half of the machines on Dec. 26, and in the middle of January.

"When I do comment, then it clouds to judge how I see an already in peril," he said at a news briefing here on Wednesday.

He said automation removes all other advantages available, a well-financed political campaign because "the ability or determine the winners (within an hour for local polls or by the end of the day for national elections) means removing the humanistic factor like poll watching which could be corrupted."

He said he pursued the presidency knowing that three of his rivals have already spent ₱600 million on television commercials even before the start of the official campaign period in February.

He said he had spent only ₱17 million in campaign materials, which were "designed to be more informative than advertisement, featuring candidates riding bicycles."

Gordon said his rivals could have spent up to ₱3 billion each by personal than would give them an advantage overlooked by the judiciary.

He referred to the Supreme Court's November ruling that a political aspirant only becomes an official candidate when the campaign period starts.

Gordon called his team up with former Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando as the "bending of nonresolved problem solver."

This was perhaps why they ended up singing different per brilliantly unorthodox tunes.

Gordon said corruption is the principal problem of Filipinos today that he intends to solve should he win the presidency.

But Fernando said what needed to be addressed is bad government engineering because money has been graft-still ends up helping the economy.

"It is not corruption that is making us poorer. How is unused? tuned . . . [it is] failed engineering. Tearing my eyes as public works secretary, I learned that [40] percent of government money was spent on finally designed infrastructure," said Bayani, a civil engineer and former Maritime lawyer.

Money misspent on government infrastructure that is quickly destroyed becomes "bubble," and is of no use to anyone, while money stolen by corrupt officials is reinvested in personal ventures that eventually help the economy, he said.

Gordon and Fernando attended the birthday celebration of birth leader Bassett Lobo Jr., who is running for Baguio mayor.

A former Olongapo City mayor, Gordon said he, like Fernando, had pursued unorthodox solutions to problems plaguing their cities.

He said the closure of the Subic naval base in Zambales would have destroyed Olongapo had the people not solved their problems using unorthodox.

He said he could pursue new solutions for the country like a "debt-for-honesty swap deal," which he said would upgrade underdeveloped nations. This could reduce or wipe out debts each time the country is able to reduce government corruption, he said. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Woman's Christmas wish: Justice for slain dad

LUS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—DEC. 23—23 years ago was the outdoor Christmas Glen Mendenares and her family ever had.

Glen, 35, and now deputy secretary general of human rights group Karapatan-Southern Tagalog, recalled that on Dec. 23 that year her father, Benny, was shot dead at around 9 a.m. while manning the a ceremony that would bring him to the municipal hall where he worked as a staff of the mayor.

Glen said the bullet entered above Benny's lip and ended at the back of his skull.

The late mansion calmly walked away then rode a motorcycle parked a few meters away.

See he from the crime scene, a police sudoku approached and drew Benny's body to a nearby hospital.

Benny, 42, was secretary general of Bayan Muna-Bay and chair of the labor group Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Laguna (Pamalag).

Justice

Benny was buried on Dec. 30. But the investigation did not progress. Even the suspect remained free despite an artist's sketch of the killer based on the account of Glen's brother.

Glen's both past in various dialogues and investigations at the House of Representatives but to no avail.

The killing of Glen's father was among the cases studied by United National Special Rapporteur Philip Alston whose report said that the military and the Arroyo government were culpable for human rights violations in the Philippines.

Glen has graduated from college in 1996, she decided to seek justice for her father full-time and became a staff member of Karapatan-Southern Tagalog.

Her former wish—justice for her slain father. Charlier Coliong-Ibe, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Magic shoot down Rockets, remain on top

ORLANDO, FLORIDA—THE ORLANDO MAGIC RETAINED ITS LEAD IN THE NBA's Southeast Division with a comfortable 102-87 win over the Houston Rockets on Wednesday. Dwight Howard led 28 rebounds and 13 points for the Rockets, in other games, Miami beat Utah, 88-70; Toronto dumped Detroit, 94-84; and Minnesota survived New Jersey, 103-98. AP

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

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STANDINGS	W	L
Alaska	11	1
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San Mig Coca-Cola	10	2
Barangay Ginebra	9	3
Sta. Lucia Realty	7	5
Air21 Express	4	8
Coca-Cola	3	9
Powerade	3	9
Welcoat	1	11

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
7 p.m.—Purefoods vs. Coca-Cola
9:30 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs. Coca-Cola

Gin Kings, TJ Giants try to end losing spells

By Musong R. Castillo

BARANGAY GINEBRA AND PUREFOODS, two storied favorites who have had it rough of late, battle separate dangerous foes at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay today as they try to stay within reasonable playoff range in the KFC-PBA Philippine Cup.

Both squads will be scouring into the game lacking wins-only of a two-game losing spell, with the Gin Kings seeking to snap out of it against the resurgent Coca-Cola Tigers in the 5:30 p.m. main game.

The Purefoods Star Giants, on the other hand, sing it out with Burger King Whoppers at 3 p.m. hoping like the Kings to stay within the magic circle of the teams that will get outright playoff berths.

At things stood, the Kings and the Giants are tied off outright berths to the Final Four with similar 8-6 cards. Both have four games left in their respective eliminations-round schedules.

With league-leading Alaska at 11-1 and No. 2 San Miguel at 11-1, both Hawkeyes and Purefoods will try to sweep their remaining games and hope that neither the Aces and the Beermen get more than 12 wins to earn a tie.

Tournament format calls for the top two teams to make the Final Four automatically, with the next three figuring in the quarterfinal action.

Those lodged in the next four ranks will then slide down to the one-miss-you-die-solid-card phase, where only the top team after a series of KO games will join the three quarterfinalists.

Alfe Bandoc had it reeling from 13 straight defeats. And if the fortunes of the Energy Boosters don't change, it will be curtains for them for the third straight tournament.

Coca-Cola has won its last two games, getting a lift from a coaching change and the return of Ali Peek to the lineup.

The Tigers, who baked Alaska's fine game can last week, will give Ginebra a rough night if they squish Purefoods in some kind of hurry.

Burger King, meanwhile, is at 3-9 and is safely in the wild-card phase.

Pacquiao-M'weather off

Arum says blood test Floyd's way out of sure defeat

FLOYD Mayweather jr. wants no more blood testing. AFP

MANNY Pacquiao says Mayweather is out to avoid him. AFP

NEW YORK—THE WORLD BOXING Organization welterweight title bout between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao will not go ahead because of Mayweather's demands for Olympic-style drug testing procedures, Pacquiao promoter Bob Arum of Top Rank said on Wednesday.

Arum said using blood tests for the scheduled March 13 clash was unprecedented for professional fights in Las Vegas. He said there is running short and they are not willing to negotiate much longer.

"As far as I'm concerned, the fight is off," he said. "It looks to me like they want a way out of the fight. Mayweather doesn't want to take a chance of losing."

Pacquiao said Mayweather merely showed that he is afraid to fight him.

"Mukot talaga na akin (He's really keen on), the Filipino pound-for-pound king told sportswriter Chino Trinidad.

"Hinapakita niya (Mayweather) na nakahanap talaga siya ng akin."

Arum also accused Mayweather of trying to play mind games with Pacquiao, saying the Filipino sensation has never failed urine tests for performance-enhancing substances.

"They want to pin it in Manny's head that they can come in any time and take blood," Arum said. "Manny believes taking blood will weaken him. This is absolutely outrageous.

"Who does Floyd Mayweather think he is, the commissioner of boxing?"

A day after Mayweather's camp threatened to scuttle the fight unless the boxers were subject to random blood tests, Arum said his fighter would agree to just three blood tests.

Date would be closer to January during the week the fight is formally announced, a turnout would be done no later than 30 days before the fight, and a final test would be done in the locker room afterward.

Arum also noted

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CHRISTMAS SCENE
A man looks in a garbage bin for recyclable materials he can exchange for money in front of a giant Christmas tree at the Acacia Center in Cubao, Quezon City. —AFP

Public urged: Be extra cautious to prevent fires

Makati accepting donations for fire victims

By Allison W. Lopez

A DAY AFTER A BIG BLAZE LEFT SOME 1,000 families homeless in the cities of Makati and Pasay, a fire official reminded the public to take precautions for the rest of the holiday season to prevent more fires.

"It's second this time that families gather and prepare a lot of food. Never leave your cooking unattended and clean your liquefied petroleum tanks for leaks," senior investigator SPO1 Vernon Mancada of the Makati fire department said yesterday.

Based on a report from FO3 Wilfredo Narda, Wednesday's fire, which razed nearly 300 houses after raging for almost four hours, started in the house of Ricardo Serrano at 2855-A Bonifacio St., in Barangay Bangkal, Makati City.

Smoke from house

A witness, Josephine Albios, said she was washing clothes at around 10 a.m. when she saw dark smoke coming from the house of Rowena who reportedly left an open stove unattended.

A fire broke out minutes later, fanned by a strong wind, it created a crack which separated Makati from Pasay City and spread to a compound behind the old BLTB bus terminal on Edsa which was full of houses built of light materials.

The fire was put out at around 1:26 p.m. but not before it had destroyed at least 75 houses in Makati City and around 700 in Pasay.

Mercado, however, stressed that the cause of the fire was still under investigation.

"Avoid arsonist connections as these won't be entertaining. With New Year around the corner, we should remember to handle firecrackers properly," he said.

Meanwhile, a Makati official urged people to donate not their clothes for the New Year and help out the victims who lost some of their possessions.

Makati public information officer chief Joey Salgado said the city's social welfare department was accepting donations of second-hand clothes as well as relief goods for the 40 families in Barangay Bangkal affected by the fire.

According to Salgado, donations may be given directly to social workers who have also put up a community kitchen for the victims who were temporarily housed in tents.

'Ondoy' victims still awaiting relocation

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

NEIGHBORS WOULD SHARE food on a long table set up in the middle of the street up a hill-down, jointed concrete street-games. This was how 32-year-old Jean Barcenero and her neighbors celebrated noche buena in Barangay Bagong Silangan in Quezon City.

But not this year. Not after floods spawned by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" swept away their homes on Sept. 26.

Some 300 families, including Barcenero's, are still awaiting relocation in a covered court in Bagong Silangan which serves as an evacuation center for families affected by Ondoy.

It is likely they will spend Christmas there, Barcenero said.

"We have no choice but to wait here," she told the Inquirer.

The covered court is divided into several areas with each family assigned to a specific spot. Boxes and sacks filled with possessions they were able to save, as well as used clothes donated by kindhearted people, serve as dividers.

To protect themselves from the cold, evacuees hang blankets on iron grills which serve as a fence but these are not enough to protect their children from coming down with a cold.

Those used to be more of them but some families have since been relocated to Tower-ville in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Those remaining are supposedly the last bunch to be relocated, but homes in Towerville were not yet ready for occupancy.

She added that she would rather move to Bulacan than return to her house, adding that until now, she still has nightmares of Ondoy's onslaught.

She said her son went with several friends on the third floor of a neighbor's house when the waters struck. Barcenero said the raw scene of her neighbors drown in the flood.

She broke into tears as she said that she and her son were lucky to be alive.

A GROUP of children amuse themselves as a woman cares for her child. They are among the persons who were evacuated from Barangay Bagong Silangan when "Ondoy" struck the metropolis on Sept. 26. Around 130 families, who have been staying for months in a covered court, are waiting to be relocated to Bulacan.

ACCORDING TO LONE WITNESS:

Truck driver makes off with ₱1-M cargo

By Julie M. Aurelio

MORE THAN ₱1 MILLION WORTH of grocery items, assorted biscuits products and plastic containers were reportedly stolen by a truck driver who was supposed to deliver the goods to his/her province.

The driver's helper, Gringo Sabado, told Quezon City police investigator Gardo Orong had ordered him to get off the truck and return a few seconds in their office in Caloocan City.

He said that when he returned, Orong was gone, along with the vehicle.

Case investigator SPO1 Mario Dante of the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said the 20-foot truck, with plate number GIU 983, was owned by Maureen Marketing based in Culler Subdivision, Barangay 142 in Caloocan City.

The police learned about the theft when the company's president, Elbert Lukban Diego filed a complaint on Wednesday night.

Earlier that day, Sabado and Orong were traveling on A. Bonifacio avenue 11:00 this year in Quezon City on their way to Tarlac when the driver asked Sabado to return a tire wrench to their office in Caloocan City.

At that moment, Orong allegedly took advantage of the situation and drove away with the truck," Tarlano said in his report.

Sabado, upon returning and realizing that the truck and Orong were nowhere to be found, immediately reported the incident to SPO1 Nuevo, the complaint's secretary.

The police said they were still trying to determine Orong's whereabouts and where he took the truck and its cargo.

DID YOU KNOW

IN 1638, Dutch immigrants plotted to seize Intramuros on the evening of Dec. 24, under the guise of bringing gifts to their Spanish acquaintances, and kill all Spaniards in sight. But the plot was discovered and thwarted by the Spaniards.

Cyril L. Bautista, Inquirer Research

No confirmation Ivler has left RP, says NBI

By Jeannette I. Andrade

AN OFFICIAL OF THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) yesterday said that lead rape suspect Jason Ivler remained in the country despite his brother's claim that he was already in Hawaii.

"In the absence of confirmation that he has left, he (Ivler) is still in the country," NBI Special Action Unit (SAU) chief and lawyer Angelito Magno said.

Ivler is believed to have shot dead Renato Victor Blanco Jr., the son of a Malacañang official, following a traffic altercation in Quezon City on Nov. 16. He has not been sighted since then.

Magno expressed doubt over the claim of Marlene Aguilar, Ivler's mother, who told the police the other day that she had received an e-mail from her son informing her that he was already in Hawaii.

Aguilar, however, did not say when and how her son left the country.

According to Magno, the information was probably meant to mislead the police and the NBI from conducting a search for Ivler.

He added that the police, in coordination with the NBI, were expected to intensify their manhunt operations following the issuance of a warrant for Ivler's arrest in connection with Ozong's killing.

"We have already undertaken measures to make sure he is arrested particularly now that a warrant has been issued against him," Magno told the Inquirer.

The warrant was issued against Ivler on Tuesday by Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 91, Judge Thelma Bunyi, who recommended no bail for his temporary liberty.

METRO BRIEFS

Beggar dies

THE BODY of an elderly beggar was found on Wednesday morning outside the gates of a shopping center in Intramuros in Manila, Manila.

Homicide investigators described the man as between 60 and 65 years old, sporting a military-type haircut and about 5'2" tall. He was dressed in a yellow undershirt and a pair of shorts. SPO2 Jonathan Abutbul of the Manila Police District homicide section said the victim's body was found around 6:30 a.m. by a woman living nearby.

Abutbul said the woman, Rebecca Hufranda, a resident of Parola Compound, told the police that he had found some food in the victim's pocket. The victim, however, who seemed weak, refused and acknowledged someone. Hufranda observed that the man could not walk and had to crawl on his hands to get to where he wanted. The victim was also gasping for breath, he added. Hufranda, however, said he thought nothing of it until he found the old man dead after an hour. Bautista said Hufranda immediately asked for help from barangay officials who called up the police. The victim's body was brought to Cruz funeral parlor for autopsy.

Jeannette I. Andrade

The WORLD

Editor Lamberto B. Glocoo

Vatican defends decision on sainthood for Pius XII

ROME—IN AN EFFORT TO CALM GROWING TENSIONS WITH Jewish groups, the Vatican said Wednesday that Pope Benedict XVI had not moved the wartime pope Pius XII closer to sainthood as a "hostile act" against those who believe Pius did not do enough to stop the Holocaust.

The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, issued a statement saying that the beatification process reclaimed the "Christian life" of Pius, who reigned from 1939 to 1958, and not "the historical impact of all his operative decisions."

Moving Pius toward sainthood "is in no way to be read as a hostile act toward the Jewish people, and it is to be hoped that it will not be considered as an obstacle on the path of dialogue between Judaism and the Catholic Church," Lombardi wrote.

Benedict confirmed the "heroic virtues" of Pius—along with those of John Paul II—on Saturday, opening the door to beatification once a miracle is attributed to each. A second miracle would be required for canonization.

The move created anger among many Jewish groups, which have argued that Pius did not speak out vocally enough against the Nazis or intervene to save Jews during World War II, and that the Vatican helped many former Nazis escape to South America after the war.

The decision by Benedict—a German who was an unwilling member of the Hitler Youth—to move Pius closer to sainthood was the latest in a series of controversies. It came less than a year after he revoked the excommunications of a schismatic bishop who had denied the scope of the Holocaust, an act that roused the pope and the Vatican to issue a series of unexpectedly diplomatic statements.

Benedict also spent many hours when he did not directly mention the Nazis or Germany during a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Israel in May, as his predecessor John Paul II had done, although Benedict has denounced the Holocaust on many other occasions.

Even as the Vatican sought to separate the religious aspects of the beatification process from Pius' historical record, observers said that Benedict's decision to move Pius toward sainthood sent a strong message, effectively endorsing his actions.

Jewish groups had asked Benedict to delay Pius' beatification process until the Vatican opened the archives from his papacy to scholarly scrutiny. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Colombian gov 'refused to walk,' says son

BOGOTA—The son of Colombian governor killed after the highest-profile abduction of President Alvaro Uribe's tenure said Wednesday his father was likely murdered because he refused to walk for his kidnappers. Uribe blamed the killing on members of the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which holds hundreds of hostages and often takes them on long hikes deep into the Amazon rainforest to avoid government forces. Luis Francisco Cuellar, a 65-year-old cattle rancher, was the first governor to be taken captive since Uribe took office in 2002, promising a "safe democracy" and a rapid-fire crackdown on armed criminal groups. Germany in Cuellar's province of Caquetá, a known rebel stronghold, discovered his body Tuesday near the dilapidated remains of a car from which he was kidnapped. His throat had been slit. AFP

4 held in revenge attack on Mexican hero's kin

VILLAHERMOSA, Mexico—Four suspected members of a cartel-aligned bid squad have been arrested in the slaying of the family of infiltrator Marine Hailed as a hero for dropping a cartel that killed a top drug lord. Tabasco state Attorney General Rafael Escobar said gunmen from the Zetas gang killed the mother, two siblings and an aunt of Marine Melquisedek Angulo. He said four Zeta associates believed to have ordered votes in the attack had been detained, but the killers remained at large. The slaying of Angulo's relatives early Tuesday just hours after the wounded service was widely viewed as a chilling warning from the Beltran Leyva cartel that the families of soldiers and police could now suffer for the government's campaign against drug traffickers. AP

Disney CEO's pay drops 58 percent to only $21.4M

BURBANK, California—Robert Iger, Walt Disney Co.'s chief executive, absorbed a 58-percent compensation cut in 2009, brought on by the deepest recession in decades. The Associated Press reviewed Iger's pay package for the company's fiscal 2009 at $21.4 million, down from $51.1 million in fiscal 2008. AP

Bin Laden daughter in Iran seeks refuge

WASHINGTON—A teenage daughter of Osama bin Laden, who has lived with at least five of her siblings in a guarded compound in Iran since 2002, took refuge last month in the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, and family members are trying to arrange for a large number of relatives to leave Iran for Saudi Arabia or Syria, one of Bin Laden's sons said in a telephone interview on Wednesday. The son, Omar bin Laden, broke with his father, the leader of al-Qaeda, before the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and now the Pentagon and move from to Qatar and Saudi Arabia. He said that his sister Iman, 19, walked away during a shopping trip in Tehran about a month ago and made her way to the Saudi Embassy, hoping to be reunited with her brother, who lives in Syria. Omar bin Laden and his wife, Zaina, who is British, said in the interview that at least six of Osama bin Laden's children and one of his wives live in uncomfortable compound in Tehran with other relatives, for a total of about 30 family members there. Omar and Zaina bin Laden said the Bin Ladens in Tehran had been treated well by Iranian authorities, but had no passports or other official documents to permit them to leave the country. WP

In US, some find it better to just ignore Christmas

By Hilary Sloat

IT WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK a lot like Christmas. So when was a good, compassionate, environmentally conscious guy like Dan Nainan to do?

The one man the fun problem. "We cut down a tree and you're going to throw it out in three weeks," he said. "If you get a plastic tree, you're wasting petroleum."

Then there was the whole issue of buying gifts. "I think it's great that people are going out and buying things and helping the economy," he said. But when a 560-liter employee can be swayed to donate in a frantic dash for holiday bargains, as happened last year, "that kind of crystallized everything for me."

The answer: Skip it. The whole holiday. No tree. No weddings, carols or any of the "whole nine yards" of trappings and traditions that Nainan said his family had always held us.

"Instead of buying stuff for people who don't need it and will probably return it anyway, I'm going to take all the money that I would have spent on presents, find some needy people—not a charity—and give the money directly to them," said Nainan, 28 years old and single, who, helping his economics and world-saving inclinations, is a professional researcher. He planned to spend Christmas Day working on his website, trolling Facebook and talking an elderly woman who lives in his Manhattan apartment building out for dinner.

This has been a year for parting bad. Christmas. Largely by economic necessity, many people have been trimming their gift lists, subduing their wholesome and selling for a drastic, lower-key holiday.

But some, like Nainan, are taking that sentiment to the extreme. For them, this is the year of the anti-Christmas, the year when everything—from the presents to that the parties planned to the prospect of family drama—are most turkey —just got to be too much.

In response, they are opting out of the festivities entirely. This year, they are taking a holiday from the holiday.

There are indicators that Christmas revelry in general may be slipping among the population at large.

This year's survey, conducted by the polling firm Harris Interactive, found that while 95 percent of households plan to celebrate Christmas (about the same as every year), the percentage of families who plan to exchange gifts is dropping: 77 percent this year, down from 83 percent in 2005. NYT

Enjoy Instant Citi Rewards at Rustan's Department Stores

Pay up to 50% of your purchases using your Citi Rewards Points until January 31, 2010

It's a familiar story: You use your credit card to pay for the bills. After collecting enough loyalty points, you try to redeem them for their equivalent rewards. But the item you want—that mink pinkie ring, for one—is not part of the roster of products you can claim.

One way or the other, you've heard stories like this from someone you know. You can choose to redeem shopping gift certificates, but by the time you get to the store, they may no longer have it in your size.

Thanks to the country's leading credit card, enjoying your just desserts is as easy as stepping into the popular retailers and restaurants in the metro. With Citibank's Instant Citi Rewards, redeeming rewards for collected points certainly notched up another level or two.

"Instant Citi Rewards is a breakthrough rewards campaign because it empowers our cardholders to make the whole store their own personal catalog and receive their reward immediately," said Ellen del Rosario, vice president for Citibank's Cards Business.

"Citi Cardholders may now use their Citi Rewards Points to pay up to 50% of their total purchases and charge the rest to their Citi Card in participating stores such as Rustan's," he said.

For example, a customer decides to buy a P1,300 dress in Rustan's. He or she may pay P650 charged to points and the rest charged to the card. The conversion is 4 points for every P1. The promo runs until January 31, 2010 in Rustan's.

By doing so, Citibank gives its customers unlimited choices – beyond catalog – providing for a completely new rewarding experience.

"With this Pay with Points campaign, we have once again joined forces in introducing a unique and innovative scheme to Citibank cardholders in Rustan's. We are confident that we have introduced another tool to better enhance the Rustan's shopping experience," said Arden Huang, Rustan's Executive Vice President.

Huang said this new offering is a result of constant interaction with clients, listening to their suggestions and evolving requirements. "Rustan's has always prided itself as an establishment that provides quality service in its customers. We continue to address those wants by making the shopping experience more enticing. The Instant Citi Rewards program provides an exciting proposition that benefits our customers."

With the Instant Citi Rewards, there is no need for cardholders to call or go online to redeem items they want because they can directly go to the store, pick any item they want and pay for them with their rewards points (up to 50%).

What's good about this program is that even if a cardholder does not have sufficient rewards points, they can still use whatever maximum amount of points that they have available. Say, one has points enough for P50, he or she can still use that and pay the rest of the amount through card.

In other words, the points become the currency so cardholders can use them to pay for any item in the store – even items that are discontinued.

"Introducing this innovative program is also a way of engaging our clients in using their Citi Card. Keeping our cardholders' loyalty is very important for us," Del Rosario said.

The Instant Citi Rewards program was also launched this year in other countries in the Asia Pacific such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. This ensures that Citibank not only continues its leadership in innovation in the Philippines, but also in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Del Rosario assured its customers that Citi would continue to partner with worthy brands such as Rustan's. "Rustan's is one of the top retail establishments our cardholders frequent. And it is an honor to be associated with them."

Huang said in return: "Citibank always looking for ways to offer the highest quality, innovative products, and additional convenience to their customers. These are the same values and objectives we at Rustan's continue to strive for. The partnership was definitely a natural fit."

Ramon del Rosario, Vice President for Citibank and Bea Tanoco, Marketing Communication Manager of Rustan's

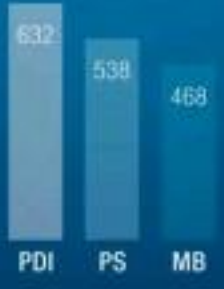
Citi's Pay with Points makes for more rewarding shopping at Rustan's Department Stores

Use your Citi Rewards Points as currency when shopping at Rustan's Department Store

Citi cardholders are not limited to the catalog, the whole Rustan's Department store becomes their personal catalog

We saw the list and checked it twice.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer remains the country's most-read newspaper, this time according to the Synovate Media Atlas' Nationwide Media Currency survey for 2008-2009.



Being No. 1 to our readers is the best gift we can receive for the holidays. And for that, we can't thank you enough.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Base: (In thousands) Average Issue Readership Nationwide, English Newspaper Reach (Weekday)
Source: Synovate Media Atlas 2008-2009 Philippines Nationwide Urban

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Gov't seeks $1-B loan for LRT extension

Cheap ODA funding for railway to Cavite

By Paolo G. Montecillo

THE GOVERNMENT MAY AGAIN DEPEND ON cheap funding from generous foreign entities for the construction of a railway project that promises to create thousands of jobs and provide a more efficient public transport system.

Light Rail Transit Authority Administrator Melquiades Robles said in a recent interview that the government was looking for more than $1 billion in overseas development assistance (ODA) to fund the extension of the LRT Line 1 from Dr. Santos City to Cavite province.

"The Department of Transportation and Communications has decided to use ODA as the financing model for this project," he said.

ODA funding is rank-and-file term in developing countries of low interest rates and easy payment terms, usually to finance vital infrastructure and welfare projects.

Among the top ODA lenders to the Philippines are the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the governments of Japan and the United States.

Robles said the start of the construction of the project would depend on how fast the government would be able to find donors to fund it. He said the government has approached several foreign funds, but he declined to identify them.

The project is expected to decongest road conditions going to Metro Manila from areas to the south, particularly Cavite.

The end of the extension would be just rather in Imus in Cavite.

The money to be raised will fund everything from civil works, the settlement of right-of-way issues and the acquisition of new trains, too.

Once the extension is complete, Robles said the number of passengers on the country's oldest elevated railway would shoot up to 400,000 a day, increasing from less than 300,000 daily passengers at present.

The extension will also make the LRT line 1 the largest elevated rail system in the country.

MYT B1

Tariff hike on ethanol bucked

OIL INDUSTRY PLAYERS HAS backed proposals to permanently raise tariffs on ethanol imports to 20 percent from the current 5 percent, arguing that this might result to higher fuel prices for consumers.

Fernando Martinez, chair of the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association and of Eastern Petroleum Corp., said that at this point when local ethanol production remained insufficient to meet the current demand of oil companies, the move to raise tariffs was not urgent.

"We will be penalizing the consumers because we might end up with higher prices for local blended with ethanol if we impose the tariff increase prematurely," he said.

"There must be a trigger point, such that the tariffs should be raised only when local production can meet the demand 100 percent. It's not fair for consumers to shoulder the 20-percent tariff," Martinez explained.

He noted that in Standing Committee on Ways and Means (CME) in third, consumers were "shouldering at least 30 centavos in additional cost, and because ethanol requires a bigger mix of 10 percent, you might end up having to import more corn and ultimately Diesel will be shouldered by the consumers."

Beginning 2009, the government has mandated oil companies to put blend 5 percent CME or corn biodiesel in diesel-fed vehicles, and 5-percent ethanol in gasoline-fueled cars. Most oil companies, if not all, are offering 10-percent ethanol blended gasoline.

The biofuels law also mandated that the blending of biodiesel should be increased to 10 percent by 2011.

MMPY B1

BSP to keep policy rates low in 2010

By Michelle V. Rosa

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas said it would continue to prioritize economic stimuli at helping pump-prime the economy, noting that concerns over slow growth was more pressing than movements in consumer prices.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. has reiterated projections that the global economy would recover in 2010, but that this would be very modest. Consumption and investments will rise, but at a tempered pace, he said.

He added that inflation would not be a problem next year, allowing the BSP to maintain a monetary policy supportive of growth rather than pursuing inflation.

"On the policy side, we will primarily be guided by the inflation outlook. For 2009, 2010 and 2011, these [inflation projections] are within the targeted range, but demand conditions remain relatively weak and the economy grew by only 0.7 percent in first nine months. Given all this, we see that the current stance of monetary policy remains appropriate," Tetangco told reporters.

Currently, the central bank's key policy rates stand at historic lows of 4 percent for overnight borrowing and 6 percent for overnight lending.

The BSP implemented a series of policy rate cuts from December 2008 to July 2009, aiming to encourage banks to reduce their own lending rates. The objective was to attract more borrowings from banks to boost consumption and investments.

Monetary officials said the low-interest rate environment was partly a reason the economy avoided a recession this year.

However, Tetangco said the economy needed a further boost by keeping interest rates low in the meantime.

Low interest rates tend to increase bank savings and decrease the goods and services that, in turn, could accelerate inflation. However, the BSP does not mind a higher inflation as long as this remains within official targets.

We like you, the inflation target is set at 3.5 to 4.5 percent. For next year, the target is to limit inflation between 3.5 and 5.5 percent. For 2011, the goal is to keep inflation within 2 to 5 percent.

BSP B1

Smile, it's Christmas

Corporate Secrets
Ricardo J. Bolaños Jr.

IT'S CHRISTMAS!

And what better way to observe the happiest season of the year (at least for us Filipinos) than to sit back, relax and enjoy the jokes I have prepared for you today.

* * *

Hither on the wall of a basic management office: "Memory is like fat. There is plenty of each, but they always seem to be in the wrong places."

* * *

The passenger service had just finally finished when there was a massive drop of thunder, following several bolts of lightning, accompanied by even more thunder nine-liting for the thousand.

The waitress slowly looked at the patron and calmly said "Well, she's up there all right."

* * *

A defense lawyer was trying, unsuccessfully, to shoot certain information from other witnesses. Finally, after two hours of cross-examination, the judge turned to the witness and asked a question that got the appropriate response.

"Thank you, Your Honor," the lawyer said. "Now is it fair for you were able to get to the crux of the matter with so questions after I had listed three times?"

"Fine," replied the judge. "I was not paid by the hour."

* * *

Husband: What are you doing?

Wife: Reading.

Husband: Nothing ...! You've been reading our marriage certificate for an hour.

Wife: I was looking for the expiry date. Do you have where it is?

* * *

While waiting to board an airplane in an airport, the passengers heard the ticket agent announce, "Would the person who dropped his pants please return to the ticket counter?"

The passengers paused in disbelief about the unusual announcement.

Sensing the reaction, the ticket agent quickly added, "Relax, folks. The pants were not a bargain!"

* * *

Son: Mom, when I was on the bus with Ted this morning, he told me to give up my seat to a lady.

Mom: Well, you have done the right thing, son, and very proud of you.

Son: But, mom, I was sitting on Ted's lap.

* * *

Conversation between a call center agent who answered a request for assistance by a computer user:

Agent: Please right click on the open desktop.

Customer: Ok.

Agent: Did you get the pop-up menu?

Customer: No.

Agent: Ok, sir. Can you tell me what you have done up to this point?

Customer: I have right click on my icon, then and I waste click and nothing happened.

* * *

A newly married man asked his wife, "Honey, you have assumed me if my mother hadn't left me a fortune?"

"Honey," she answered, "I would have married you, no matter who left you a fortune!"

* * *

A pastor parked his car in a no-parking zone because he was late for an appointment and couldn't find a parking space. He put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block 14 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Please forgive me."

When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note: "I've circled this block for 15 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. Lord knows I need the money."

* * *

Wife: Do you want dinner?

Husband: Sure, what are my choices? Fish? Steak? Both?

Wife: We're out.

* * *

A man is recovering from surgery when the surgical nurse approaches and asks him how he is feeling.

"I'm okay, but I didn't like the four letter words I heard the doctor (and doctor) he replied."

"What did he say?" asked the nurse.

"Oops!"

* * *

A wife asked her husband: "What do you like most in me, my pretty face or my sexy body?"

The husband looked from head to toe and replied: "I like your sense of humor!"

* * *

An employee has just returned from a two-week vacation. After the first day, he asked his boss for another two weeks off to get married.

"What?" shouted the boss. "I can't give you more than one. Why didn't you get married while you were off?"

"Are you mad?" replied the employee. "That would have caused me to take vacation sick!"

* * *

Merry Christmas!

For feedback, please write to: rjbolanos@pacific.net.ph

Tutuban lease renewed

By Dodee L. Lucas

THE PROPERTY UNIT OF PUBLIC Initial Prime Orion Philippines Inc. has renewed its lease over a lucrative piece of real estate in Manila's Divisoria shopping district from 2020 ahead of schedule.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Prime Orion said it has signed an agreement with Philippine National Railways for a fresh 25-year lease contract for the land occupied by Tutuban Mall.

The 300,000-square meter property is located along C.M. Recto Ave. in Manila—an area known for the markets that sell local and imported goods at wholesale prices.

The June said that a total of P5.6 billion would be paid to PNR for the entire term of the contract "plus a percentage and/or equivalent to 12 percent of gross sales or rental income of Tutuban Properties and a 15-percent rental income on cinema operations."

A minimum fee of P750 per square meter will also be paid to PNR for additional improvements on the leased premises.

The new lease contract will commence on Sept. 1, 2014. Prime Orion said it expects a return after it opted to renew its lease four years early.

Prime Orion describes itself as an investment holding company with interests in non-life insurance, real estate and property management, information technology and information technology consultancy services.

Companies under Prime Orion include Tutuban Properties, Inc., Cosmic Gravitas Inc., Orion Medical, FLT Prime Insurance Corporation and Orion Solutions Inc.

SLTC welcomes likely entry of MPIC in SLEx

By Paolo G. Montecillo

THE COMMISSIONER OF SOUTH LUZON Expressway (SLEX) is hopeful that a partnership with local infrastructure giant Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) will result in a world-class highway system through vital parts of Luzon.

Lucio Tan Group Inc. chair Edmund Y. Pangilinan expressed interest in acquiring a 29-percent stake in South Luzon Tollway Corp. (SLTC), currently held by Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC).

Pangilinan intends to use shares would be getting rights in the firm to grow the entity for the tentative construction of SLEX toll/extension segment Southern Luzon Expressway (SLEX), which MPIC owns such operates.

Jesus David, SLTC president, in a recent interview welcomed the prospective entry of MPIC, saying the operation will offer synergies that it would result would benefit both companies. Motorists using the highway would be able to enjoy the convenience that such partnership would produce.

"It will benefit us both. The management of the tariffs will be better and easier... It will also be more efficient and convenient for all motorists, so we welcome that opportunity with MPIC," David said.

David earlier said MTD Capital Berhad, the Malaysian firm that owns 40 percent of SLTC, has the right to buy offered to buy PNCC's stake in SLTC before being sold to anyone else.

MPIC is backed by the influential Sobrepeña family of Cashcocoan.

Despite this, he said "we have no problem with whomever comes in SLTC. We have yet to get a proposal from MPIC, but we are open to talks," David said.

Union Bank, BDO lead buyers of SMC shares

UNION BANK OF THE PHILIPpines and units of Henry Sy-owned Banco de Oro Universal Bank led the list of investors in the recently issued preferred shares of San Miguel Corp., the company said on Wednesday.

SMC earlier raised P7.3 billion in a total of fifteen tranches of its new shares for further corporate expansion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, SMC said the list of investors in its capital raising exercise was led by Unionbank of the Philippines which purchased 40 million shares, the PSE Broadcast Line information Guy Inc., Interconnect Peter Inc and Josephine Ng Lo, Unpublish Retirement Fund and New Dawn Inc. should be.

Other investors include BDO Capital & Investment Corp., BDO Private Bank Inc., Philippine National Bank Inc., Philippine National Construction Corp. and Banco de Oro Inc.

The issue was also bought by BDO Leasing & Finance Inc., BDO Strategic Holdings Inc. and the Equitable Card Network Inc.

SMC issued 67.3 million preferred shares which were sold to 21 buyers at P70 apiece.Bureau 10.2, Lucas

Gov't . . .

From page B1

The LRT line is already being extended to E.A Infrastructure from its current northern end of Monumento in Caloocan City to connect to the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) station in North Avenue in Quezon City.

This will add to the line's current 15 kilometer length.

Other rapid lines on Metro Manila include the MRT, which spans nearly the entire length of EDSA, and the LRT Line 2, which travels from Santa in Binondo to Santolan in Pasig City.

Tariff hike on ethanol bucked

From page B1

Based on the Philippine Energy Plan (2001-2014), a 5-percent ethanol mixture blend would need around 288.11 million liters of ethanol by 2009. With a 10-percent blend, 960.37 million liters (inclusive of consumption growth rate) would be needed by 2011.

As of this year, only two companies—San Carlos Bioenergy Inc. and Leyte Agri Corp.—are producing a combined 48 million liters of ethanol for local requirement.

Local ethanol producers have been lobbying for the tariff increase to protect and boost investments in the industry.

According to the Ethanol Producers Association of the Philippines (Epap), raising tariffs on imported ethanol will not only curb the losses of local producers but will also increase the country's energy security.

Amy H. Remo

BSP to keep . . .

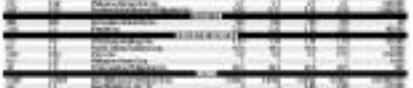
From page B1

Central banks across the globe reduced interest rates in response to the economic rapid. Advanced countries, including Australia, however, have remarkably reversed their policies to avoid the adverse impact of prolonged low interest rates.

Economists said that more bubbles may ensue if the economy sees a recovery next year.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

As of December 21, 2001



CURRENCIES

Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	51.0000	1.000000	51.0000
Japan	100	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
United Kingdom	Pound	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Switzerland	Franc	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Canada	Dollar	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Singapore	Dollar	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Australia	Dollar	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Taiwan	Dollar	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Thailand	Baht	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
China	Yuan	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Korea	Won	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
India	Rupee	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Germany	Mark	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Italy	Lira	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Spain	Peseta	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Sweden	Krona	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Norway	Krone	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000
Denmark	Krone	0.0000	0.000000	0.0000

Gov't drafts 'green' economic growth program

RP responds to concerns on climate change

By Bonnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING A NEW Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) that will call for "green growth" strategies to counter on-site climate change, according to the President's spokesperson on economic affairs.

Rolando G. Tungpalan, who is also deputy director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the government should be able to draw from the rich available resources of renewable energy sources.

Tungpalan was referring to initiatives on environmental sustainability presented during the recent Ensuring Environmental Sustainability Outcome Board Meeting between the government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Government representatives gave UNDP updates and outcomes of the administration's programs on sustainable development that received funding from the international agency.

Among the UNDP-funded programs and projects are Nordis-led ones related to energy, eg. disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in local governments' planning and decision-making processes as well as to strengthening the country's institutional capacity to adapt to climate change.

During the meeting, it was noted that key stakeholders are now better able to manage environment and natural resources, develop and use renewable energy sources, cope with the impacts of environmental emergencies and maintain sustainable development.

With the current MTPDP wrapping up in 2010, Tungpalan said the NEDA is starting to prepare a new one for the next six years under a new administration.

"While climate change is the source of the world map these days, there is a road ahead for available resources aimed at green growth and sustainable development," he said.

However, Tungpalan said the government should be able to have a smarter way of valuing these available resources to fund the country's development priorities and produce results.

"Foreign-aided projects should be financed/assisted by strong country ownership and transparency and accountability, as well as streamlined and in harmony with other projects," he added.

Cordillera farmers hope for a brighter holiday

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

CHRISTMAS MAY BE MERRY FOR some well-off residents of Metro Manila. But the same can not be said for vegetable farmers in Cordillera.

Smuggled and possibly unhealthy vegetables with no phytosanitary permits are flooding Cordillera these days.

And because of the smuggled vegetables' lower costs, postharvest from Cordillera have been displaced.

Last Dec. 23, we received the following (sic) message from Jimmy Lagan, vice-governor of Ifugao, regarding facts and smuggling said: "There are a lot of smuggled carrots, potatoes, broccoli, lettuce. Big names are allegedly behind [the smuggling]."

Lagan added that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) had done nothing to curb the smuggling" which has become of the presence of powerful backers.

Also, farmers are not even trying to hide the smuggled goods at the market.

"[A lot to] the share what to do if don't know what to do]," she said.

Solution

When we asked Lagan what happened, she said, "The people who used to help in suddenly said they could no longer serve."

Jerold her went to give up and talk to an official who has helped in the last six years recently promoted BOC Deputy Commissioner John Pagamitlan.

Twelve hours later, Ginya sent another message: "Nag-chat na akin si John. Pinapa-fax niya ang impormasyon ko. Dako-mit ine-e-brief niyonge. He has sent someone to check out my information."

When we contacted Pagamitlan, he said that he could not do much.

It was the BOC's policy not to apprehend any violating trucks during the holiday season because this could be considered as extortion.

However, we later came up with a solution. BOC personnel could go with Lagan and visually confirm the presence of smuggled vegetables as Lagan point them out to them. That way, BOC personnel need not interact with Divisoria retailers, and thus avoid charges of extortion.

Dear the holiday season is over, BOC officers apprehend those retailers.

But Pagamitlan warned: "Many retailers will stop selling smuggled products if they know we are accompanying Lagan and placing surveillance teams. We may no longer catch those retailers."

Lagan replied: If our surveillance would lead to a halt in the sale of smuggled goods, "then our objective would have been fulfilled."

Analysis

Often, we are frustrated when we do not get the response we need from the government. But instead of giving up, we should look for good people in the government who can be our allies. In this particular case, Lagan had given up, but fortunately she found an ally in Pagamitlan.

But even with an ally there still was a problem—BOC's policy that prevented him to personally go to apprehending smugglers/retailers because during the holidays.

But we came up with a creative solution. In this case, the steps taken may spell the difference between a bleak and merry Christmas for the Cordillera vegetable farmers.

Last Dec. 23, it was announced that the budget deficit went up to P272.5 billion from January to November this year. This amount is more than four times the P60.7 billion seen in the same period last year.

In the 11 months to November, BOC collections decreased by 17 percent from last year. Last month alone, collections went down by 15 percent, perhaps because the dollar is not weak.

Was there a boom in smuggling activities because BOC collections had gone down? How much was the BOC supposed to collect?

On June 17, 2008, the Ateneo economist that there was a difference of $14.5 billion in annual average imports (from 2002 to 2007, based on exports from the National Statistics Office (NSO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the one hand, and the BOC on the other.

If the NSO and IMF are correct with their import figures, then the losses from smuggling could amount to P1.28 billion—which is almost half of our budget deficit today.

Working with government

It has been a year and six months since Alyssa had asked BOC to explain the difference in import level reports. All we heard was a verbal statement that the $14.5 billion difference was the amount that entered the free trade and export processing zones. Is this accurate?

COMMENTARY

We deserve a more detailed and written explanation of this very important issue. From this explanation, we can identify where to concentrate our anti-smuggling efforts. Aside from BOC and the regulatory agencies, it is also suggested that the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry give their highest priority to curb smuggling. Some officials of the two agencies do not believe it is their job to stop smuggling, that smugglers are killing our agriculture and industry.

Together with the good people in these agencies, we can join by formulate creative solutions to fight smuggling. This can be the best Christmas gift of the government, not only to the Cordillera vegetable farmers, but to the nation as a whole.

The author is chair of Agrewatch, former undersecretary for presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary for Agriculture, and Trade and Industry. For inquiries and suggestions, e-mail agrewatchphil@yahoo.com or cmiphil @2321121.

PRULINK	PRU LIFE UK
Investment Account Value of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	Current Week Dec. 23, 2009	Last Week Dec. 16, 2009
Bond Fund - Peso	1.0037	1.0033
Managed Fund - Peso	1.0203	1.0189
Growth Fund - Peso	1.7778	1.7681
Equity Fund - Peso	3.0851	3.0573
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.0155	1.0170
Blended Fund - Fund 1	1.1044	1.0987
Blended Fund - Fund 2	1.0918	1.0928
Blended Fund - Fund 3	1.0918	1.0928
Dollar Managed Fund	1.3038	1.3083
Peso Managed Fund - Class	1.0183	1.0183

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Last-Minute Shopping? Be Smart . . . and Safe!

It's not really a game to do last-minute shopping, for Christmas as some people would say. For one thing, you could be lucky and catch extra discounts or promotional offers designed to move certain stocks faster as stores do not want to get stuck with them after Christmas. Like Christmas ham and "queso de bola" for example. They're now available at 90% discount or "buy-one, take one!"

For many of us who have to wait for our Christmas bonus, 13th month pay or remittances from relatives working abroad, there's really no choice but to do our shopping close to Christmas day.

Unfortunately, at this time, there are many people in the stores. And where there are crowds, there too are the pickpockets and unscrupulous traders.

But last-minute shopping can still be fun if we are smart. How to be a smart shopper?

1. Wear simple but comfortable clothes and no expensive nor expensive-looking jewelry so you don't attract pickpockets and scammers.

2. Use a bag with a shoulder strap so that you can hold it in front of you or hold it under your arm. Be sure to hold your bag at the armpit if it's your other hand that's busy buying, items that you are examining or choosing.

3. Look carefully at the weighing scale when buying fruits, vegetables, meat, fish and other products sold by the weight. When buying items that can measure—like cooking, gallons and fabric, watch the measurement carefully. Otherwise, you could be cheated by a few centimeters or inches.

4. Inspect clothes you're buying for worn-out zippers, unmatched buttons, etc.

5. When sure you're paying the correct price. Almost all goods in malls and supermarkets have Universal Product Codes. These are the marks with vertical lines and numbers that are read by the cashier's electronic scanner. This gadget is not 100% foolproof so look at the display screen of the cash register while your goods are being scanned.

6. Bring the store's flier or advertisement to compare the published price with the scanned price. Sometimes reduced or promotional prices are not immediately programmed in the computer.

7. Check your receipt before leaving the counter. If you notice an error, complain immediately so that it can be rectified right away. If you wait till you get home to check your receipt, you will spend more to fare or gasoline and parking fee to go back to the store, not to mention time.

8. Avoid paying with a P1,000 bill to avoid pickpocket operations. Caution to attendant will drop or hide it discreetly and claim that you handed him/her only a P500 bill. If you have no other bill, tell the cashier or attendant that you handed him/her a P1,000 bill to avoid scam; you will be notified your bill is fake but the cashier, vendor or attendant already replaced your genuine bill with a fake one when you were not looking.

9. Don't carry big amounts of cash. Pickpockets and snatchers are on the look-out for them.

10. To avoid bringing big amounts of cash, use your Bancnet ATM card to pay for your purchases at department stores, shops, supermarkets and other business establishments. You avoid the long lines at the ATM and save time. It's easy to shop with your Bancnet ATM card. Just present and swipe your card at the terminal, you input your ATM PIN and voila! your payment is electronically debited from your ATM account.

What's more, you can earn cash rebates when you pay with your Bancnet ATM card. For every P20 transaction, you are rewarded 1 point. Accumulate 50 points and points are exchange them for cash rebates. The more points, the bigger your rebates.

So be a smart shopper now! Merry Shopping!

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Lilia Arles Espinosa

Sustainable management of digital info with HDS

HDS CEO TOM

KUALA LUMPUR—IN an era where digital information is created by the click of the mouse, it has become more and more imperative for companies and institutions to manage the vast amount of data involved in their business to ensure smooth operations.

Though a number of companies have indeed invested in some form of data storage systems, many do not get to maximize its capacity storage, thus wasting resources.

That's why the Hitachi Data Systems (HDS), the world's only vertically integrated storage company, focuses on customizing storage to be a sustainable house with storage innovation strategies.

They do this by employing the latest technology that does not hurt the company's perfect. In short, they do more with less.

"With HDS, we make sure our data storage solutions deliver what the customers need to help them access, preserve, and manage the explosion of data around the world," said with their own businesses," said Kevin Eggleston, the brand's senior vice president and general manager for Asia Pacific.

Eggleston said this and more in a key presentation he delivered to hose of hundreds of CIOs and business leaders here recently for the annual Hitachi Data Systems Asia Pacific CIO Summit 2009 with the theme "Inspire and Innovate: Get Set to Win in the Economic Upturn."

"We wanted to invite our customers in the Asia Pacific region so we could all share our best practices with each other, then share them to the rest of the world," said Eggleston.

Though storing data seems easy and simple from mere storage for mom data), the work gets harder and more complicated as the volume of information increases in the coming years and the newness and their level of importance is taken into consideration.

"What we do is we maximize virtualization through a unified management and virtualized infrastructure that reduces cost and saves clients money. We align our clients' businesses with technology goals to ensure their growth and profitability," he said.

According to him, it is HDS's unique "economics your storage" approach that keeps the brand the leading provider of data systems with 13,000 platforms.

He said HDS remains to be the market leader in storage virtualization with more than 13,500 virtualization controllers shipped worldwide this year, which gave its clients up to 26 percent savings annually.

"Our growth continued with 500 new customers over the past year, which is a significant growth. We particularly grew strongly in the Asian region, in India, and in China," he said.

Eggleston said: "HDS will continue to focus on our excellent products first, then their marketing, to ensure our clients get the best for them every single time."

AUTOMATIC CENTRE SUPPORTS OSP CAMPAIGN

Automatic Centre, in partnership with Operation Smile Philippines (OSP), supports the "Share for A Child Can Smile this Christmas" campaign. OSP is an international, non-profit volunteer medical services organization providing free reconstructive surgery to indigent Filipino children and young adults born with cleft lip or cleft palate and other facial deformities. Portions of sales made on selected items in all Automatic Centre and Sogo Home & Office Centre outlets will be donated to OSP. Anyone can also avail of the P50 Tatoos a smile cards which are to be pasted on the Christmas tree of smiles installed Sima Fine Furniture branches. Shown are Julie Lim Dayrit (extreme left), Automatic Centre's executive vice president for home and business division; and Rolando Mariano (2nd from left), OSP president and executive director, with Isa Kapadiya, Automatic Centre marketing supervisor, and Albert Santos, OSP development and marketing manager.

Home Health Care Holiday news

Residential facilities made affordable

HOME HEALTH Care marked a milestone on its 9th year with the blessing of its 2nd Assisted Living Facility in Tanauan, Batangas. Dasmariñas City, and will soon open one in BF Homes Parañaque.

Last Pesos to provide highly affordable living units with residential care for seniors, people with disabilities or the fending.

diseases. Shown are (from left) HHC managing director Dr. Jose Sison, Fr. Bladito, parish's pre-

grain director Dr. Boris Camagay and director Dr. Willie Lapdarines.

Musical treat at Teacher's Village

Music has proven effective in positive mood and social interaction for seniors as shown by Soprano Gloria Coronel (left), resident professor Pilo Nicanor (right) and pianist John Mendoza quietly hidden during the 6th anniversary of Home Health Care as a home-based Dedicated care service provider and extending of its residential facility in Teachers' Village. It will soon open another facility in BF Homes International. Las Pesos to provide highly affordable living units with residential care for seniors, people with disabilities or the fending diseases. HHC also provides respite and adult day care. For inquiries, call 829-1165, e-mail info@homehealthcare.com.ph or log on to www.homehealthcare.com.ph.

The secret to loving fruitcakes

WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HOW THEY don't like fruitcake, it could only be because most don't realize how good fruitcake should actually taste—after all, there has to be a reason why it has become a long-standing holiday tradition.

So how do you choose the right fruitcake?

The secret lies in how it is made. Quite simply, fruitcakes are mainly humor cakes that contain enough butter to bind succ dried fruits and are later soaked in various liquors to preserve it. But certain Delicious cream fruitcakes are a work of art and a labor of love, and that's when it becomes a coveted holiday item.

TREASURED English Christmas

Those who actually know how to make fruitcake beyond the basics are able to mix and match the best of fruity flavors with the smoky chunks of nuts to create a playful gastronomic delight that complements the contrasting ingredients. You see, the holidays are over. Fruitcakes traditionally make their appearances are all about indulgence, and for those there being only one fruitcake in the world, there are actually many varieties to choose from today. Fruitcake connoisseurs like to suggest that to experience the rich fusion of flavors from all the ingredients, it's best to set it aside so that its key ingredients like the liquor can age the fruits.

Because fruitcakes preserve well, it is a great gift idea as well. During the Christmas season in particular, shops around the metro begin to promote their fruitcake holiday favorite as part of their colorful gourmet packages.

That you, if you're considering giving the gift of indulgence and introducing your people to that wonderful holiday tradition, be sure to visit Delifrance and hies into their selections of unique fruitcakes to satisfy the most discerning holiday palates.

Taking a delightfully tangy twist to the fruity favorite, the Premium English Fruitcake is already soaked to brandy and rum juice months before baking, and then flows with an artfully decorated selection of pecans, walnuts, glazed fruits, cherries and dates. Another favorite must-try is Delifrance's Rum-Raisin Walnut Fruitcake, which tops a moist, buttery cake base with sweet macadamias and cranberry walnuts. Finally, the delightful combination of rusty local guavas and fruits take center stage with Delifrance's Food for the Gods-a creation reinforced with chopped walnuts, pecans, prunes, dates and topped with sweet strips of dried mango to give the holiday favorite a distinctly tropical twist.

Delifrance uses only the highest, most premium quality ingredients to give true connoisseurs and fresh palates a delightfully distinct fruitcake experience. Should you choose to share this holiday tradition to family and friends, it also comes in festive holiday packaging that highlights each variant's festive spirit and exceptional flavor.

It's all about choosing the right gift to give during Christmas, and if you want to make the best choice when it comes to fruitcakes, you can't go wrong with what Delifrance has to offer.

For inquiries, call the Delifrance main office at 633-8681 or log on to www.delifrance.com.ph.

PINOY WINS DAIRY QUEEN CHALLENGE

Filipino sales executive Jose Castillo beat 16 other contestants and went away with the first leg of a trip to Dairy Queen's Asia Expo. Castillo will have to beat other team's winners from North America and the United States. The championship is in Cancun Mexico in January 2010

Should we still advertise on TV?—Conclusion

HERE'S A SOMEWHAT OF last week's question:

Q: For the longest time, we've been a TV advertiser. Last year, we had an online ad agency partner cut us loose much more cost-effective than nowadays to advertise via online channels.

This agency argued that it's no longer cost-effective to advertise on TV. Two realities support this statement, according to this agency. The first is that there are now just too many TV channels, each with its own audience. Secondly, you would expect that with the reduced audience size of each channel, the ad placement cost in a TV channel would drop, but it did not. It actually went up and continues to go up. The net result, says this agency in short, was our ad money is no longer worth placing on TV.

So this year, we tried to allocate advertising via both banner ads and display ads. But we did not give up our TV advertising. Last week, we got a summary monitoring report on our "online ad effectiveness" project-ed to year-end. We were disappointed, to say it mildly. The number of responses to our online ads (both banner and display) was way below the year's forecast. Only crickets were chirping.

When we contrasted the online advertising, many of us in the marketing committee were asking: "Should we still advertise on TV?" After reading the report on our online advertising, all of us are now asking: "Should we still advertise online?" We are loyal readers of your column. May we have your perspective please?

Here's part 2 of our answer for those who missed part 1. Just go to bizpinoy.com or marketingrx.com.

Online advertising games: Engagement

In online advertising, built-in search engine and social networks, the operative consumer behavior is ad "engagement" and not only ad awareness and recall. How else visitors come to a website already looking for a particular brand or service? They will satisfy their undeserved or unserved "consumer value."

They are already prepared and ready to be engaged. It is not the online ad media that's failing us. It is the marketing scientist that is failing us in their ad engagement.

The distinction is important to understand. It explains why your online ads obtained "disappointing" responses, and there were days when there were no responses at all. Because your online ad content was flawed in its presentation of the consumer value in your advertised product or it was talking about the wrong consumer realm for the user population of the online ad channel or vehicle.

TV: Getting "real"

We've said that online is a medium is more engaging than TV, not because it is by itself engaging (on because it is the consumer's predisposition that goes online the character. That's exactly what TV needs as an ad medium. It needs to re-learn to bring—or use be made to bring—engagement to its TVCs. How to make ads TV commercials get consumers to endow TV with the engagement character? How can TVCs gain their consuming viewers' engagement?

We are serious today to accord cases giving us strong clues. Consider TV programs first. Over the past eight years, the most regularly watched global TV program is American Idol. (Which, before it was on-air with new Idol judge, Ellen DeGeneres on Jan. 12, 2009.) What's the secret of Idol's viral audience engagement power?

The senior Idols ex's research suggests that it is Idol's "consumer value." Viewers talk about what happened in each show and they continue to devote hours after the show's finished, well in his Tipping Point book refers to that kind of continuing engagement as "stickiness" of a message, a conversation value.

The same property holds engagement to a TVC. There is consumer engagement in a TV ad if to viewers find that they want to talk or text or e-mail their office mates and friends about what they heard and/or saw in it. That is, if it has conversation value and the conversation value has evidence. Two examples: (1) the McDonald TVC on Lola and Nanay, and (2) the Globe TVC on the Hip Hop nurses.

So "should (you) still advertise on TV?" Here are the prescriptions implied in our foregoing diagnosis:

1st. Yes—if you want to take advantage of TV's power of speedy audience reach. But think niche and segment when you do this. The more well-defined the niche that you want to reach and to segment, then please your TVC is this network channel.

2nd. You have to go beyond just reach. You have to go after TV audience and consistent engagement. That means simple but it's a call-order given the way TV channels market TV ad placement and the way TV media research agencies sell and optimize TV rating services. But ponder and keep in mind that consumer engagement is a customers behavior and not a character of the ad media, whether TV or online.

3rd. If you wish your TV ad to engage your target market segment or niche, be clear in your ad copy about your target consumer's priority and differentiating value. Then make sure that your ad copy has conversation value that would trigger its viewers to talk and to keep on talking (i.e., with excitement) to friends about it.

4th. Use online media channels to lend additional excitement to your TVC message. This will get consumers to keep on talking about your advertised product and its promised consumer value. It's adding more rounds of conversation value to your product's consumer value.

(Keep your questions coming. Send them to us at drnedmarketing@gmail.com or letsbeingthere@pldtdsl.net. Until then and have a Merry Christmas!)

GOINGS-ON

Landbank inks deal with Blue Coat

Land Bank of the Philippines, the official depository of the Philippines and the country's largest government institution in rural areas, has deployed Blue Coat ProxySG appliances in 38 branches across the Philippines to speed the delivery of key business applications and improve customer experience.

"Many of our branches are located in remote areas with limited bandwidth, yet it is essential that they have uncompromised access to centralized applications that are critical in providing our customers with consistently high-quality service," said First Vice President Mer-V Recasa. "With Blue Coat appliances, we are now managing our applications to effectively utilize available bandwidth and accelerate response times to our branches. As a result, we can provide faster transaction processing for our customers and a better, more responsive experience."

Robinsons features lanterns

After the successful culmination of Sinakulan Festival in Pampanga, Robinsons Starmills set its stage once again for the Pampanga's Giant Lantern festival.

The world renowned Giant Lantern Festival competition was held last Dec. 19. It will be followed by a full-fledged celebration to be mounted in the mall's parking lot on Dec. 26-27 and Dec. 30-to-Jan. 3, 2010.

Robinsons Starmills Pampanga is very excited and excited as ever, as it carries an uneasy and host of this annual prestigious event in Pampanga.

Present during the contract signing were Robinsons Malls' top executives including Nito G. Mapa, Robinsons Malls general manager; Tommy L. O. Robinsons Malls VP for property management and Melody dela Cruz, Robinsons group property manager.

RCBC Bankard scores win

RCBC Bankard has scored another win when its entry to the Master Card Hall of Fame Awards 2009 entitled "3 Ways to Travel in Style" won Best Image Campaign (Cross-Border) in awarding ceremonies held recently in Sentosa Island, Singapore.

Besting three other banks from all over the South and South East Asia region in the same category, RCBC Bankard was given top honors for demonstrating how its campaign strategy led to increased international card usage in terms of sales volume and transactions outside the country of issuance.

RCBC Bankard's campaign involved a customize power packed benefits and features of its Platinum Blank Card MasterCard, particularly its Travel Plus insurance benefit that extends insurance protection to cardholders providing them peace of mind in cases of unexpected death or accidents but in case of any medical emergency.

Total on "Bawat Litro Makakatulong" campaign

Total (Philippines) Corporation, in partnership with the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), re-launched its "Bawat Litro Makakatulong" program as part of its customer assistance for typhoon victims.

From Nov. 24 to Dec. 31, 2009, Total Philippines will be donating 25 centavos for every liter of gasoline purchased to select Total stations in the typhoon victims through the PNRC.

Also, since Nov. 11, Total Philippines has been giving discounts of P1 per liter for diesel to jeepneys and other public transportation. The discount was increased to P2 per liter effective Nov. 26. The diesel discount program is being implemented in various Total stations in calamity-stricken areas.

These assistance packages for the victims of the recent typhoons are in addition to the previous donations and relief operations conducted in partnership with employees, dealers and haulers.

LG reaches out to consumers

THE BRAND HAS THE CONSUMER'S PACE on its lungs, and that shows LG Electronics' commitment to its consumers, said Ray Anond Hernandez, the company's corporate marketing head.

"At Electronics listens to consumers," Hernandez said. "They are the beginning and end of everything we do."

LG's dedication is based on the continuous investments research efforts aimed at getting what the consumers need and want, he added.

"[Results of these researches] are now among our most valuable assets that enable us to create powerful products that respond to the demanding needs of our consumers and achieve market leadership," Hernandez said.

To make its products more accessible to consumers, LG Electronics opened this year its own concept shops and sales outlets in different parts of the country.

In early first in the Philippines, the LG Concept Store in Glorietta 4 in Makati is a one-stop shop featuring gadgets, home entertainment and digital/lifestyle appliances—all of which address the consumer's needs in design, innovation, energy conservation and health preservation.

Each product has been made in blend seamlessly with the consumer's home and lifestyle.

Also, three concept shops exclusively for LG mobile phones are now operating in the Ayala Center area of SM Megamall and SM North Edsa stores in Metro Manila, and SM Sandrid in Pasay. At LG Mobile concept stores, expect a wide array of stylish and sophisticated

LG STRIVES to get close to the market through its concept stores.

handsets, from the most affordable full touch screen LG Cookie, first 3-Class touch screen format, to the world's first transparent design phone GD900 Crystal and new 40-MP Chocolate.

To drive further growth in mass areas, LG positioned its Unique sales and service branch in Cebu City. There is also a dedicated service center in Tagaytay, reserving Northern Luzon.

These regional hubs offer premium customer service and support to partner dealers and authorized service centers.

Unique in the Philippines, the state-of-the-

Splash invests in key growth drivers

SPLASH CORP. THE MARKET leader in the personal care market for skin whitening products, recently released key business highlights for 2009.

Over the course of the last fiscal year, the company reported an investment of P800 million in its core brand marketing for consumer brands Skin White, Rollon, Whitened, Robuxa, Vitress, Carotel and Thera Vite.

Based on the latest industry studies, the money was well spent: the latest brand performance review of AC Nielsen Research Inc. (ACNR) pegged four of Splash's brands as dominating five segment categories, with a share of 64 percent of the Philippine market.

Guided by its in depth research on consumer trends and purchasing behaviors, Splash made significant investments in the development various consumer solutions. New products were launched as well, such as Skin White 3-in-1 Face Cream Powder, effectively creating a new category within the market.

"Apart from continuously offering breakthrough product innovations that cater to the specific needs of our markets, we are equally committed with making the consumer journey more convenient and satisfying," explained Splash CEO Dr. Rolando B. Hortaleza.

Domestic operations for the year showed that the shoe is door penetration of the company's core brands has doubled. Accordingly, Splash increased its sales force to keep up with the escalating demand, as well as appointing four sub-distributors to cover areas in the visayas areas with its range of products.

In international operations, the fourth quarter was likewise favorable for the publicly listed firm, as it registered a 24 percent business growth, driven by the expansion of local consolidation for the Middle East and Southeast Asia markets, with particular emphasis on neighboring country Indonesia. "Once again, this validates our company's capability to excel in the international arena," Hortaleza added. "Our strategic investments are beginning to bear fruit, and there still indications that our existing full speed ahead in the right direction."

In Cebu, no dearth in creative craftsmen

From page B6

Cebuanos, introduced the style to Other Cebuanos on a large scale level.

Rivera said the recognition helped boost Cebuanos' exporters' confidence, attracting international buyers to their wares.

Philippine exporters, particularly in the furniture industry, have been orders declining due to the global financial crisis. As a result, several companies have ceased production.

Exporters that have survived continue to participate in local and international trade fairs to remain visible in the market.

The CFIF with assistance from the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, led 11 members to the Manila FAME International in October.

CFIF is now promoting the Cebu International Furniture and Furnishings Exhibition (Cebuanas) in March 2010.

The Manila FAME is held twice a year... in April and in October.

At the FAME international last April, Cebu company Nature's Legacy bagged the Ka-ba Award in the two-luxury category for its Harvey Wall Art—a wall décor made from recycled paper.

Reasons for their design capabilities and craftsmanship, Cebu manufacturers have developed processes and establish Cebu as the design destination in Asia, the CFIF explained.

Cebu designers and manufacturers have also used indigenous materials such as sea grass and abaca (manila hemp), among others, making their products sound, luxurious, citrus, stone and wrought iron, the CFIF added.

Cebu manufacturers and designers also use animal skins, shells, seeds, leaves and tree barks.

Toblerone entices Filipinos to say 'Thank you' more often

From page B6

blocks have more than doubled since the start of the campaign to promote vapors, one of gratitude among Filipinos. Kraft says sells more than seven million Toblerone chocolate bars a year.

MarchBanks said that Toblerone today is one of the fastest growing brands in the Kraft portfolio, which includes such brands as Tang juice drinks, Oreo Wafer cheese spread, Eden cheese food and Oreo cookies.

The campaign was able to six members for the brand because Toblerone already enjoyed high overall in the three phases.

MarchBanks said almost all Filipinos are familiar with the brand, as all they needed was that extra push to actually buy one.

Filipinos marking overseas are considered a major market for Toblerone as they are most likely to buy Toblerone chocolates as the duty free stores in Manila or pasalubong or gifts for friends and family members welcoming from home.

MarchBanks shared that Filipinos also buy bars of Toblerone to bring back to their places of work overseas.

"I would say that Toblerone is by far the top brand as Duty Free," said MarchBanks.

The challenge is to make Toblerone also the top chocolate brand across different markets, said MarchBanks to emphasize that it is as to easy to bring just that

BUSINESS Friday

In Cebu, no dearth in creative craftsmen

By Irene R. Sino-Cruz
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE FURNITURE AND furnishing industry here continues to thrive on the creativity and excellent craftsmanship of its workers as two homegrown firms bagged top prizes at the 18th Manila FAME International Show last October.

The Cebu Furniture Industry Foundation Inc. (CFIF) said designers of the yellow low-back chair of Obra Cebuana clinched the Manila FAME Katha award for Best Home Furnishing.

Also, Best for Fashion Tools Inc.'s wall made of aluminum and shells won the Katha Award for Best Fashion Accessory, the CFIF said in a statement on Monday.

Manila FAME International came up with the Katha Awards in recognition of Filipino creativity and craftsmanship.

Criteria for judging include design and innovation, as well as form and function.

This year's panel of judges was led by architect Joey Yuzon and included fashion designer Rajo Laurel.

"The moment I saw this chair, I was enamored. We [judges] all agreed that this looked distinctly Filipino and yet it was very modern," Laurel wrote in his blog, describing the chair by Obra Cebuana.

Timmy Barcos designed the chair under the guidance of architect Rene Viador, who conceptualized the use of the weaving style called "solihiya" in many furniture and furnishing pieces produced by Obra Cebuana.

Jose Ace's shell and aluminum wall also got the Katha judges' nod.

"I loved this the minute I saw it. I thought it was so beautiful, and the use of shell and light aluminum was genius," Laurel wrote.

Ilan Ace, whose piece is licensed to Wingsmiths, manufacturer and exporter fashion accessories and home furnishings.

Obra Cebuana general manager Edwin Rivera said the company's year of ceaseless weaving in its award-winning chair and other furniture and home furnishing items reflect the Filipino culture of heritage.

"The weaving style has been practiced since the Spanish era," Rivera said.

He added that Viador, who is also

DESIGNER Timmy Barcos presents his award-winning design, the yellow low-back chair, manufactured by Obra Cebuana.

Chrismas flowers, business bloom

A SEA of red poinsettias draws customers to flower shops in Baguio City. The reddish leaves of the plant make it one ideal Christmas decor.

By Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—IT'S that time of the year again when flowers associated with Christmas bloom and flower and plant vendors can breathe easy as stocks fly off their gardens.

At the Baguio Orchidarium in Burnham Park, shops, and Atikho's flower garden, have been selling an average of 100 pots of poinsettia every day since November.

Depending on the size and variant, a pot of poinsettia costs between P100 and P1,500. Shops could earn as much as P300,000 during the Christmas season, flower and plant traders have said.

Anne Lim Acosta, owner of AMAY's, said poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is called the Christmas plant because of its bright red petals and it serves as a natural Christmas decor.

"Poinsettias give a happy feeling because of their color, which is very attractive. But in the color of Christmas," she said.

But Acosta said sales of poinsettias go beyond the Christmas season.

Her sales do peak in December when the petals turn bright red as temperatures drop.

Atikho's started selling poinsettias wholesale in 1992.

"When we were starting, we would only sell hundreds of pots, but because the clients are increasing, we soon sell the plant by thousands," Atikho's said.

Poinsettias are also bestsellers at the Nursery's garden.

The shop offers three varieties of poinsettia such as the common known poinsettia with petals in red, white, peach and pink. The other varieties are called "tollipop" and "two faces."

Thirvi Lanoy, a sales attendant at Burnon's, said the red poinsettias are always been the best sellers. She said her clients include banks and hotels.

Atikho's has also started steady clients for its holiday plants and other poinsettias. The flower plant, money tree, ornamental plant it's corsus and roses.

FLORIST Lanoy shows off her poinsettias of many colors.

"These ornamental plants are considered as lucky charms and bought as 'welcome the New Year,'" Acosta said.

She said many households in the city and nearby towns where there are no poinsettias to celebrate Christmas.

"Red is always associated with Christmas and it has always been a tradition that poinsettia becomes part of the celebration," she said.

"Poinsettias can grow in temperate and cold climate. There are those who intends it as a flower that only grows in cold climate. Its red color becomes intense during the cold season, especially in December," she said.

She said growers must cultivating poinsettias as early as July. She said these plants require a well-drained and watered regularly since they absorb much water.

Touch DDB gets honourable mention in the international Media Thinking Awards

Eugene Manalo and Hilin Manalo

To celebrate Asia's stories in media, the first-ever Media Thinking awards was launched to honour campaigns that show outstanding, true innovation and prowling, to-planning and strategic mind in Singapore on the 4th of December 2007. Both the agency behind this successful campaign, as well as the client who demonstrated a clear vision in contributing to the company's success, were honoured at the event.

Just in its first year, Touch DDB with its Star AMPAY Hotline garnered an Honorable Mention in the inaugural Media Thinking Awards, for translating the brand and consumer insight into an integrated multiple channels campaign. With the business slowly dipping due to a long period of inflation in advertising, the challenge for the team was to reconnect Amway as a Dream Selling Company to the Filipino consumers competing against direct selling giants. The strategy: create a help line that will directly link the consumer head to the brand promise which is helping you build a better life. The help line was communicated in direct response vehicles that used conventional channels in unconventional ways. It has become so popular that an Amway email help desk (helpdesk@philamway.com) was mobilized to augment fulfillment traffic on the help line.

Touch DDB Philippines pioneers an approach that goes beyond mere channels utilization by creating campaign frameworks that unify a diverse range of media into single, resonant brand behaviour. More than just conventional media planning, the team is involved in personal interaction, experiential marketing, key influencer marketing and campaign platform management among many other things.

Touch DDB boasts of a team of industry professionals hailing from diverse work backgrounds and each contributing to a collective range of skill sets, expertise and varied perspectives. The idea is to have a dynamic that is not only groundbreaking today but will set an unbeatable standard as advertising soon adapts its structures to make channels planning a significant industry norm. Dimples Cruz, seasoned media strategist whose broad experience spans this region, leads as Managing Director. She is ably supported by Eugene Manalo who is a specialist in strategic planning and media investment; Reena Cruz who champions idea generation and activations management; and Mike Mañalac, an expert on the digital front and emerging channels.

According to President of Touch DDB Philippines Susan Stoddart, "Ultimately, Touch promises planning that results in campaigns that generate their own investment. Different channels are utilized not only to broadcast messages but to feed off one another in an open, paired one that sparks and promises touch points for consumer-brand interaction".

Gil Cruz, President and CEO of the local DDB group of companies states, "DDB's basic tenet of creativity will be more important than ever. We are applying creativity not just in crafting and producing commercials, but also in situating advertising and other forms of brand experience in the most constructive contexts. It will all be idea-based communication to unleash creative heights, and bring clients to customers closer than ever before, those enough to just reach consumers heart".

Toblerone entices Filipinos to say 'thank you' more often

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE SIMPLEST SENTIMENTS ARE THE most powerful: "I love you," "I'm sorry," and "Thank you," to name a few. Unfortunately, they are also the least expressed out loud.

And one international study released a few years ago indicated that, as far as saying "Thank you" goes, Filipinos are among those who do not say it often enough, throwing many to conclude that Filipinos are generally ungrateful.

Not a few would beg to disagree.

Nevertheless, what Kraft Foods (Philippines) Inc. wants is to encourage Filipinos to say "Thank you" more often, preferably with a Toblerone—one of the most popular chocolate brands in the Philippines—to drive the message home.

To make this happen, Kraft embarked on a campaign in 2007 to position Toblerone as the "thank you gift of thoughtful Filipinos." This involved the use of traditional advertising on print, radio and television, as well as non-traditional advertising, such as billboards and so-called guerrilla marketing tactics.

Laying the groundwork

Rita Machilisanda, category marketing manager of Kraft Foods, explained to the Inquirer that instead of commissioning "from the top, down" campaign through traditional advertising, Toblerone wanted to touch the hearts and minds of Filipinos "from the ground, up."

That was why in 2007, for example, Kraft produced giant Toblerone that students of top universities carried around with pride.

This helped evolve the connection of the pouch with the brand, which while it enjoyed high brand recall, lacked some fresh connection with new markets, such as students.

But the centerpiece of the marketing campaign was the culmination of the Thousand Thank You Day on Oct. 20, 2007, marked by a concert at the Mall of Asia.

In the run-up to Thousand Thank You Day, Kraft tapped six bands to produce all-original songs with gratitude as the central theme; commissioned artist Rina Albert to come up with Thank You cards and encouraged everybody through social network sites and its own dedicated site to say "thank you" to people who have touched their lives in a positive way.

The City of Manila gave the campaign a boost when it issued a resolution declaring Oct. 20 as the city's official Thank You Day.

Taking the campaign a step further, Rep. Cynthia Villar has come up with a resolution passed now pending in Congress to declare Oct. 20 as National Thank You Day.

On the second year of the campaign, Kraft held the 1st National Thank You Day Awards to honor "extraordinary and inspirational individuals in the Philippines who deserves to be shown deserves appreciation."

The first to get the award during the celebration last Nov. 20 is the late President Corazon Aquino. The four other nominees that included former Manny Pacquiao, comedian Dolphy and DJ Mahal of the Year Eleven Pehalfcuido.

KRAFT's Rita Machilisanda (right) and Carla Lacuesa (left) say "Thank You" to Camille Villar, daughter of Manuel Villar.

Thank You Day

Kraft plans to hold the Toblerone National Thank You Day Awards every year to encapsulate Filipinos who do their people and country proud.

To say that the campaign has done the brand wonders is an understatement, said Machilisanda.

From years of flat growth, sales of To-

LIFESTYLE Fashion & Beauty

Editor Thelma Sevilla San Juan

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and Ria Francisco-Prieto

Running into kindness

A six-month run across the US showed the true meaning of Christmas—'I still don't know why we experienced America in the manner we did— under all four seasons'

By Joy Rojas
Contributor

ON SUNDAYS, I WOULD MIND accept an invitation to dinner and a sleepover in a complete stranger's house. But when Tony Kuiper asked, it seemed like the right thing to do. Tony, who with his fellow pharmacists Gary Pond, literally ran into me and my running partner Bim Macabe when we were negotiating Arizona's Highway 98, was thrilled with the caveat of us running across America, and he extended the invitation as a way to get to know us and our project better.

At first I politely declined, saying it was too much trouble on their part and that we were expecting another gentleman, a Las Vegas-based photographer named Danny Tiraz, whom we barely know ourselves, to join us later in the day.

"Well, if you change your mind," Tony said cheerfully and wrote his address down.

I'm glad I did. The dinner, salad and a pizza Tony prepared from scratch, was wonderful, the company even better. Tony and Lucy pharmacists in the health facility that services native American Indians, treated Mel, Danny and me like we were their oldest, closest friends. Early the next day, Lucy who took the three of us to her for the night in her home, fed us breakfast, then drove Tony to where we were running so he could join us for a two-mile jog.

They say long-distance running is a lonely sport, and in the early stages of Sidelong Patagonia, that grand plan of mine to run across America, it certainly felt that way to the many months I spent pecking this project together, I endured one rejection after another from would-be sponsors, mentioned crew members come and go, and even one Mel through open-heart surgery.

In time, this lonely endeavor would prove to be a true team effort. Friends who were watching me from the sidelines became so dogged as I did to make this huge undertaking some true. Publisher Joe Bonamaldo and Leah Caringal took time from their busy schedules to find the funding for the run, and colleagues Francine Marquez and Alya Honasan were shoulder, patiently listening to my woes and offering advice. "Rojo me 'pan, Joy," said the cult-spoken Francine, who had never seen me run, yet sensed an insider that accounted for situation of Dr. Robert Lufkin, inventor of Sportsday, the hydration drink Mel and I consumed during our run.

Once we reached the US, our circle of members grew even larger. More than its breathtaking landscapes, America has blessed Mel and me with countless people like Tony and Lucy—total strangers who surprised us first dinner to the homes with their sincere kindness and boundless generosity. I've written about Bob and Sylvana Nelson, a couple who promised us a room in their Colorado Springs home, and the man I only know as Tim, who offered me a bag of oranges and cold water from his backyard after I asked for directions on my second day of running in California.

Even state troopers were supportive of our cause. "Are you cold? How are you doing with the high altitude?" asked Brett Pontrich, a patrol officer who I encountered all throughout the day on our way to South

TOMORROW

YOU CHOSE BY AN ANGEL. The author with Danny Tiraz, "a professional photographer disguised as an angel," one more than family came and running mate Mel Macabe, when he joined the race in Arizona.

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KIKI Linares and Nenie Basilio

NICKI Encarnacion and Pia Rodriguez

DAISY Payumo, Emily Lopez, Virginia Lara and Burma Lemotan

PEPANG Tiongson, Karen Macasaet, Mabel Abaya, Nora Leonor and Thelma Sara

Nene Leonor celebrates her birthday with tea party

INTERCONTINENTAL Manila executives Maricar Aquino, Angela Soriano and Grace Camacho

ANDI Manzano and Louie Barreto

IT WAS ANOTHER FABULOUS YEAR for our Queen for a Day, dainty-minded Nene Leonor, who celebrated her birthday with an afternoon high tea party at Mint restaurant at the SM Mall of Asia. Susie Lander sponsored the affair attended by the celebrant's super circle of true friends.

Stepping the ribbon during the hand passages were runway-royalties such as Ambassador Cristina Ponce-Enrile, Dr. Glenda Barney, Shoemine Concepcion and National Artist for Fashion Jr. Ogie Pilapil Alcasid. "This is the first time we have a gathering for VIP-card holders, which is an upgrade to the elite circle of shoppers," said Mac-mood's senior manager Lia Lozano.

The best part is that points are tripled on the shopper's birthday month, clubbings. Treats include a sponsored party for the celebrator and her pals just like the soiree Nene had for her unique, palanggas.

Call Rochelle Llacuna at 5500019 and 5500022 or e-mail dic@mc-dcorners.com.

INTERCONTINENTAL Manila's Cecile Teodoro, Host Hennessy's Olga Alcaraz, Accu Golfers and Food & Beverage director Ed Wong

INTERCONTINENTAL's director of public relations Jenny Pelta and son

JEWELMER'S Jacques Christophe Brandtner, Florence and Angel Kanapi

SHIMMIE and the Voice of Manila Trend, Lisa Malpil of Princess Cruises and Bob Tiscano of Club Lima Great Ship Adventure

CASSANDRA Rosario and Child Mass director Rachel Rosario

NIEEL Romano, Inter-Continental Manila GM Charles Marshall, Jeanne Pinsamano-Cruttin, Sean Romano, Anna Maria Marshall and Colin Cruttin

STARS OF THE DAY. Chefs Roberto Mallonzar and Rene Ortiz with superb host, Mandarin Oriental Manila's popular general manager, Muri Bradford

LIA Lozano Cuijano, Mercy Concepcion, Ambassador Cristina Ponce-Enrile, Dr. Glenda Barney and our Queen for a Day Nene Leonor

EMMY Blanco, Peng Quevedo and Diana Santos

OLGA Salonga and Dennie Ramirez (seated), Marina Pantoja, Tina Jacinto and Betty Garcia

PEGGY Marcos and Chit Sobol

TESSIE Anquez, Mel Layug and Letty Bonnan

NORMA Chittuma of Philippine Bobi Inspirer, Gladys Lee and Greggy Vera Cruz (seated) Tessie Romangan, Chit Sobol and Fernana Ledesma

Fund-raising event

Makati's first lady first ran last year and the country's longest-operating international chain hotel, InterContinental Manila, celebrated its 40th dazzling ruby anniversary with a fabulous dinner show at the grand ballroom, clubbings. Tickets at P1,000 were sold to the public to raise badly-needed funds for Child Haven, a halfway shelter for cancer-stricken children from broken homes in the province while undergoing medical treatment in our town. The fully packed ballroom treated Comte-Manille's namesakepossibles to an awesome gourmet four-course dinner from the Prince Albert Botswana kitchen.

Highlight was the gorgeous pirasma bought the cultural auctioneer of super rare gold lamella tea strainer by Jewelmer and named after yours truly and how's cyber-smart asset, PR director Jenny Peña. Inked at US$15,000, the necklace fetched US$7,000 for Child Haven. Hotel executive assistant manager Angel Kanapi made the winning bid. Shabby shocked and overjoyed was the recipient of the necklace, her vivacious wife, Florence, whose birthday happened to be the day before the event, palanggas.

The Queen of Philippine fashion, designer Ben Barreiras, and the exciting, hard-to-match Supervillain National Polls Dream Company Band's performance appearing with such notables Ben showed off a 45 piece collection of elegant Philippine canvas, plus three wedding gowns.

As finale, a shower of confetti and flowers fell onstage as Ben, his models and the Supervillain Dance Company took a well-deserved bow. The hotel's GM, Charles Marshall, said his thank you to the guests and his hardworking talk-talk team for a totally successful happening, clubbings.

Blue Ribbon included Lifestyle Network, Jewelmer, of course, Princess Cruises, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Inocom, Hype Global, The Philippine Star, plus the talented Nadia Cuna for his extemporeos, PIC and Vertical Design Production.

Christmas at Mandarin

The Christmas air was all over the capsule. Thrill were when the elegant Mandarin Oriental Manila laid out silver Christmas bells and mummys that accented the ceiling, and miniature crystal Christmas trees that adorned tabletops. Three brimmed with delicious homemade specialties of executive chef Heinz Ottiker and executive pastry chef Roberto Mellemaar, palanggas.

Mandarin Oriental's general manager, already-a-popular personality, Mark Bradford, welcomed the residents of the stunning Christmas setting, explaining, "This is a preview of the year's holiday gastronomic offerings."

The elegant Thrill décor and Christmas works of art of international interior designer Jonathan Marti will adorn Mandarin Orientals lobby. These complete the Christmas ambiance for the last days of 2009, palanggas.

Merry Christmas to all of you, my palanggas. May you spend a wonderful Christmas with your loved ones and family.

Gifts for the sole

By Irene C. Perez

CAN'T DECIDE WHAT TO GIVE YOUR favorite person this Christmas? A pair of comfy footwear is never out of fashion. Here are trendy flip-flops and casual shoes that can take you and your loved ones from pili-shopping to Christmas party to to your much-awaited holiday vacation.

FRANCISCO "Paco" Elizalde, managing director of Gio, distributor of Ipanema, Grendha and Rider

For her

There's a reason Ipanema is still around since its first appearance in 1971. The flip-flops make you want to be on Brazilian beaches. The soft soles are kind to the feet and cushion the heels—great for long walks and long days.

The styles are freaky but friendly to most feet shapes. And we love that it's easy to store and clean without our having to worry that the paints would come off or we light scratching.

Ipanema tied up with Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen in 2002 and came up with the Ipanema Gil collection—the global heartthrob, says Francisco "Paco" Elizalde, managing director of Gio, local Ipanema distributor.

New styles include Ipanema Appliques Fem, with floral appliqués on the straps; and Ipanema Anatomic Neo, designed to cute pleasure the shape and contours of the feet.

IPANEMA flip flops

If you want something more glam for her, consider Grendha Instincts. These dressy sandals have thin straps and rhinestone accents that go well with girly dresses and skirts.

For him

Give your man something he can use daily. Ipanema Mens are durable and, as Elizalde says, "the longer you wear it, the more it molds to your feet, and the more comfortable it gets."

RIDER for kids

You can't go wrong with Classics Brasil with Brasil flag accent; Anatomic Surf with wide straps for bigger guys; and Ipanema Surf Tennis for outdoor adventures.

For the no-fuss athletic guy, Rider helps the feet relax after an intense game. It looks simple and manly, and would go well with most casual wear.

For kids

Kids' shoes shouldn't just look good, they should also be safe.

The Grendha Baby collection features easy-to-wear sandals with fun colors and cute designs. Holiday styles are Grendha Sweet Baby, slip-ons with bows by former Miss Grendha Candy Baby Fat, candy-colored Minty Jones, and Grendha Baby Candy Pop, dainty sandals for smaller kids.

"Grendha Baby shoes are not just pretty, they also have PVC soles that give stability and soothe delicate feet," says Elizalde.

TOUT en Cuirre notepads and box

CHART in real alligator

LEATHERCARE box in rawhide, headpack in ash wood and cowhide

Shoppers flock to Hermes' opening—the 'low-profile' kind

By Cecile V. Marcel

THE BIRKINS WERE PRE-ORDERED AS EARLY AS February. It's class little wonder that when Hermès, the storied French leather goods house, opened its doors on its first Philippine boutique last June 4th, it was swarmed by last-minute Christmas shoppers long anticipating the brand's arrival on their shores.

"We're pleased, very much," said Hermès Philippines store manager Marie Kerighan, chuckling.

Hermès, which started as a saddle shop in Paris in 1837, has since evolved into a high-fashion house, with iconic products with years being waiting lists like the famous Birkin and Kelly handbags, named after the British actress Jane Birkin and actress-turned-royalty Grace Kelly.

"We didn't have time to plan anything because it's Christmas and just opened our doors, but people came. We were busy Christmas Day. From today you can hear the [beats] in the background," he said on the phone Tuesday night.

Hermès will formally open new stores in Greenbelt 5 this month.

On Sunday, shoppers were snapping up the scarves, belts, spreads and other gift items. "And handbags, of course. For themselves."

"Shoppers" were not the usual suspects. "Low profile. Very," Kerighan said.

Asked how many Birkins were pre-ordered, he let out a laugh.

"I bet I can't say the [exact] number ... There's an allocation; you can't buy more than one. But I'll tell you, time's are coming real soon."

The rest of you will just have to patiently wait.

BRACELETS in enamel

CHEVRONS in porcelain bowl/dish and porcelain square plate

LOGANGE in printed cashmere and silk

HATS in felt and cashmere

SHOULDER bag in croc leather

BELT in box calf skin

PIQUE Soldier Carré 70 in "mirage" silk

WOMEN'S watch

How to remove

From page C1

It also conditions the lashes.

Cold cream

Gently rub your dry fingers on the eye area. Use a warm damp wash cloth to remove product and make up at the same time. Make sure it doesn't go in your eyes cause it's very sting.

Petroleum jelly

Just use a small amount. Use it like how you use cold cream.

Disposable towelettes

This is the easiest and quickest way to remove eye makeup on your bathtub table and just wipe off makeup. You don't have to rinse it off or use wash cloths to wipe off the products.

It doesn't matter what product you choose to remove the eye makeup. What is important is to take it off every night. Merry Christmas!

A Warm Family Christmas at Sofitel

A Warm Family Christmas at Sofitel Philippine Plaza will spark holiday moments that will be cherished for many years to come. Kith and kins are in for a treat with the yuletide package, which includes room accommodations for two (2) adults and two (2) kids plus breakfast for two (2) at Spiral. Youngsters aged 7-12 years get 50 percent discount on breakfast while children below 7 get to indulge in the hearty breakfast for free. For pampering that's not only good for the body but also for the soul, drop by LeSpa and get revitalized from head to toe. For name-pumping activities, one can roll the dice and place bets at the game rooms. For relaxing options, dabble in the clear waters of the lagoon pool and let the children loose at the Kids Club for some fun sports and recreational activities.

The holiday merry-making starts with the various choices of celebrations from Spiral to Sunset Bar, LeBar and 7Peccadles. On December 6, 13, and 20 in Spiral, let children feast on the Sunday Brunch with exciting activities for them such as ginger bread, truffle, and cookie decorating and story-telling by Santa Claus. For everyone, there is roast turkey and trimmings, bucha de Noel, and spiced mulled wine gracing stellar billing in the menu. Any evening within December, celebrate that family reunion with a Filipino Christmas dinner at Sunset Bar. Tickle your taste buds with the traditional bibingka and puto bungbong delicacies served fresh and hot off the pugon. The banquet table will not be complete without the scrumptious lechon amidst the cool sea breeze that adds to the Christmas atmosphere.

For a more intimate celebration among close relatives and friends, Executive Chef Marko Rankel prepared a four-course set menu for LeBar that will surely whet the appetite. Savour mouth-watering dishes like Open Face Cepe Ravioli, Seared Goose Liver with Truffle Foam, Turkey Consommé, and Herbed Marinated Rack of Lamb also through December. Over at 7Peccadles, be absorbed by world-class music and entertainment with a tantalizing menu list of favorite pica-picas and hand and sell beverages.

Adding to the gaiety of the yuletide season are heavenly serenades of children choirs from different exclusive schools. Hearing them will definitely evoke bliss and thoughtful memories of Christmas. The hotel is adorned with holiday ornaments topped by a Gingerbread House that holds delectable treats for gift giving and partaking or that serves as a festive background for family photos.

Take home this Christmas

Enticing Walter Breads Ensaymada

Filipinos' penchant for eating goes all year round but it is most evident during the merry months of December when we celebrate Christmas.

Christmas, for most Pinoys, is an extremely important and reverend holiday. We take pride in having a Christmas celebration that is said to be the longest and warmest in the world.

It is a time for gathering of friends and families, for sharing, and for preparing, savoring and giving food. Usually food is served lavishly, often in buffet style.

Breads enjoy a favored spot at the dinner table and among the typical fare home goodies. The delectable ensaymada often tops the lists of variety breads. It is a delight to munch alone or partnered with hams. During Simbang Gabi, when Pinoys attend dawn masses, this bread is preferred with coffee or hot chocolate.

Walter Breads Creamy Ensaymada with no Sugar Added

This Christmas, Walter Breads introduces soft and chewy mini-ensaymadas and chewy ensaymada with no sugar added. It is an ideal treat for weight watchers and health-conscious individuals.

Temptingly, it is a dozen of chewy goodness, comfort food that will definitely make its way to Pinoy's favorite bread this holiday and the year to come. It is so appetizing that no Christmas festive fiesta table would be complete without it.

It is a perfect complement to pasta dishes, hearty salads, and other holiday specialties. It can also be offered as snacks for both the young and the young-at-heart while enjoying endless chats and reunions.

The bread can also be relished immediately or toasted for crispy goodness. Simply, enhance any unsweetened portion as enjoy longer freshness.

Food as gift

Worried what to give this Christmas? Why not give something they can take pleasure eating?

But with so little or time to make home-cooked delights, bring the fresh, healthy and delicious **Walter Breads Chewy Ensaymada**. Food, as gifts, is almost always welcome. When the recipient does not particularly like the present they can easily find others who do.

What's more, it is packaged for easy-carrying, so put it to your list of must haves for picnics and family trips.

Walter Breads is known for creating a maker of breads with nutritional value while still offering great taste. The result of working with nutrition experts and using only the best ingredients is a maker of healthy breads, low in fat, high in fiber, and cholesterol and transfat free, bank, in 2009.

All Walter Breads products are available in all leading supermarkets nationwide.

Running into kindness

From page A1

York, NY. Meanwhile, Paul Serpette, one of nine state troopers who checked on Mat and our chase vehicle during our run to Hillsboro, MO, talked about his recent and first half-marathon experience ("Never again," he said shaking his head), then cheered us on the next day. "Be careful!" he said and waved.

For the most part, those strangers would remain just that, nameless individuals who simply wanted to help, expecting nothing in return. There was the Japanese lady who handed me a bottle of water after the one we dumped on the ground; leading motorcycle from the hear and barricading us the doorstep of a bank in Brandsel, MO. There were the three couples who paid for our breakfast in Nottingham, PA. And I've lost count of the motorists who offered me a lift—even if I wasn't asking for one.—How heightened my senses I told them why I couldn't accept. ("I'm from the Philippines and I'm running across America!" I'd say.)

With a setback like a pelvic stress fracture, Tabbing Pangan(g)'s team benched out to include a powerful power brigade. Rene Amarilla, a close Filipino friend of Danny's since Trainee, lapped last Methodist pastor and churchmates in Vegas to pay for us, and Pinay Bayani, our unsinkably optimistic friend from Kansas, asked us to speak in a reunion of ex-seminarians at Big Bear, CA.

And talk about a mother's love! In St. Louis, MO, Danny's mom Sally treated me like one of her own, assuming me of her prayers and that of her Baptist group. Back home, my mom did the same, texting me about the many priests and friends she secretly in send us their good thoughts and prayers. Indeed, the supporting of engineer runs so overwhelming, even global money transfer company Western Union was more friend than corporate sponsor during this trying time.

"Joy," said Mike Morales, Western Union's marketing manager for Pacific and Icebobbin, "I have no doubt in my mind that you will finish the run."

While Tabbing Pangan(g) finally came to an end in Central Park, NY, on Nov. 22, the many friendships that I and I cultivated in our six month run across 16 states endured. Danny, who has become more than family to us, is a quick call and e-mail away, as is Tony who still won't get over what we just did.

"I has it neat to how much ground you covered?" he asked. I'm more boggled by the greatness that carried us through the various trails and scenic byways of the 16 states we crossed.

I still don't know why we experienced America in the manner that we did...painfully unpredictable and random almost all the four seasons. But with the great pioneers, wonderful friendships, and lifetime of stories to tell and retell, I'm really glad I did.

IN THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS. Arizona pharmacists Lucy Pond and Tony Kuyper, this author and running partner Mac Mackie

How to remove eye makeup

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO TAKE OFF your makeup before closing off. This can be a challenge supposedly during the holidays. And the eye area can be the most challenging. It must be done to avoid irritation, clogging of pores and even infection.

Remember, the skin around the eye area is seven times more sensitive than the rest of the face so be extra gentle.

Here are some products you can use to remove eye makeup.

KNOCKOUT! Ria Francisco-Prieto

Olive oil

This is one of my favorite beauty products, which is a natural way of removing eye makeup while conditioning lashes at the same time. Put a little olive oil in a cotton ball and gently wipe over the eye area. Anyone excess off with warm damp washcloth by patting gently.

Baby oil

This product is good if you have sensitive skin. Apply exactly how olive oil is applied.

Win this.

To all our Lifestyle beauty readers, we will be giving away 3 Esprit watches, 2 Timex ironman watches and 5 gift checks worth P1,000 each from Sanrio. Log on to ... more on for details.

LIVING Stars

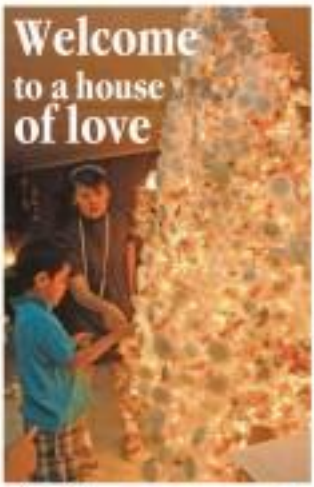
Lyra Evasco G. Velarde
E-mail: evascolyra@inquirer.com.ph

BOOKS

Jolina Magdangal

ABE MIRACLE created reading me sweet "A Thousand Splendid Suns" by Khaled Hosseini. I couldn't put it down, a friend who lives in New York recommended it. It's so heartbreaking. I cried all throughout. It's about war and politics in Afghanistan, but I still felt every twist, every corner.

Jhayzel Sun Diego-Jr



Welcome to a house of love

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Jon Gabriel Postrado

CANDY PANGILINAN is back in the house where she grew up in a bid, and it's all because of her own son Quentin.

"It is best for Quentin to be surrounded by people who understand his condition and [who can] discover him with tender loving care," said Candy Pangilinan of her decision to live with her mom Doris and sister Kris on a house in Sauyo Hill, Sapo, Quezon City.

Quentin, 6, has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD. He was diagnosed when he was just a year old.

"When I go abroad for shows, I feel secure knowing that my son is in good hands. I'm not comfortable leaving Quentin with the household help. They may not be so patient with him as my mom or my sisters," said Candy, a single parent.

Candy used to live in a three-room house in Scottsville Village, also in Quezon City, in 2003, after she and Quentin's father separated. Candy moved back to the Veloz home, "At the time, Quentin's doctors told me he wasn't

WELCOME D2

TV5 EVP Ai-ai De Las Alas, Candy's fiance, helped deck the house with it happiness.

BRONZE, silver and white ornaments light up the area.

CANDY'S mom, Doris, redecorates every quarter.

THE GARDEN, featuring a Nativity theme, is the setting of frequent late-night dinners with friends.

GANDA! Pangilinan made some of the Christmas ornaments herself. The family started holiday decorating in September.

WITH 6-year-old son Quentin (left)

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SM SAN LAZARO — Directors Club · Newport Mezz Box Seat

SM CLARK — Directors Club · Newport Mezz Box Seat

SM CEBU — Directors Club · Newport Mezz Box Seat

SM NORTH EDSA — BUKAS NA HANGGANG SUSUNOD NA LINGGO · BUKAS NA HANGGANG SUSUNOD NA LINGGO · BUKAS NA HANGGANG SUSUNOD NA LINGGO ·

MOTHER and son read, play and bond here in Quentin's room, at left. Christmas tree in the living room (below), one of hers, is a gift from Cindy's friend, Michelle Candelaria.

SHANG CINEPLEX

1) AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG GP 2:30, 4:50, 7:10

2) I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE PG-13 2:30, 4:50, 7:10

3) NOBODY, NOBODY BUT JUAN GP 2:10, 4:45, 7:10

4) ANG PANDAY GP 2:15, 4:45, 7:10

MANO PO 6 GP 2:40, 5:05, 7:35

CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCES at the GRAND ATRIUM

Shangri-La Plaza

Welcome to a ...

Homepage Bri

ready to go up and down the stairs. This single level house suits him perfectly!" Candy told Living Stars.

At his age, she said, Quentin is slowly starting to understand what Christmas means. "This is why we prepare so early as September. We put him involved in decorating the house. He used to look confused whenever we exchanged gifts, because he thought gifts were only for birthdays. He told him it's 'noise' birthday, and that the gifts are from Him."

Busiest time

Christmas is the busiest time of the year for the family. Candy said. "All my siblings and their kids will be here on Christmas Eve. We will play games, have dinner and open gifts. We will give a prize for the best dessert this year. My older nieces will be competing. The next day, my friends and my mom's will come over for lunch. Midday dancing mag-iba pero, so friends of ours whose families are living abroad are welcome to spend Christmas Day with us."

4 Xmas trees

Candy's mom, an interior designer, changes the house décor every year. "This Christmas, she really got busy," said the comedienne. "On her orders, we set up four Christmas trees in different parts of the house. Every tree had a color scheme. The one in the living room has bronze, white and silver ornaments; the tree in the garage, pink, silver and lavender. The one in my office is decorated in blue and silver; the one in the kitchen, white."

This year, a Hershey house was set up in the garden. Small white lanterns hung in the kitchen and a buffet table stands in a corner of the garage. "This house always has visitors, especially in the 'ber' months. We have eight sets of tables and chairs, always prepared for impromptu parties."

MTRCB RATING GP GENERAL PATRONAGE

MALL SHOWS December 27 SM North Edsa 4pm December 30 Cinema 9pm – Mega Extravaganza

REGINE MARK ANTHONY MAJA XAIVIER ZORAIDA ZSA ZSA JESSICA SARAH

SHAKE RATTLE & R11

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MALL SHOWS December 27 SM North Edsa 4pm December 30 Cinema 9pm – Mega Extravaganza

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SHARON CUNETA

MANO PO 6

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MOVIEWORLD

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMA MOVIE GUIDE

GALLERIA

1 RESERVE
2 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
3 NOBODY, NOBODY BUT JUAN
4 ANG PANDAY
5 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
6 MANO PO 6
7 MAYAMAN
8 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE
9 RESERVE
10 RESERVE

MANILA

1 MAYAMAN
2 MANO PO 6
3 ANG PANDAY
4 NOBODY, NOBODY BUT JUAN
5 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
6 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
7 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE

METRO EAST

1 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
2 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE
3 NOBODY, NOBODY BUT JUAN
4 ANG PANDAY
5 MANO PO 6
6 MAYAMAN
7 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
8 RESERVE

MOVALICHES

1 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
2 MAYAMAN
3 MANO PO 6
4 ANG PANDAY

FORUM ROBINSONS

1 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
2 MAYAMAN
3 MANO PO 6
4 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG

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STA. ROSA

1 ANG PANDAY
2 MANO PO 6
3 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
4 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE

LIPA

1 ANG PANDAY
2 MANO PO 6
3 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
4 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG

DASMARIÑAS

1 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
2 ANG PANDAY
3 MANO PO 6
4 NOBODY, NOBODY, BUT JUAN
5 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE

STARMILLS

1 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
2 MAYAMAN
3 MANO PO 6
4 ANG PANDAY
5 NOBODY, NOBODY, BUT JUAN
6 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE

IMUS

1 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
2 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE
3 NOBODY, NOBODY, BUT JUAN
4 MANO PO 6
5 MAYAMAN
6 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11

ANGELES

1 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
2 ANG PANDAY
3 MANO PO 6
4 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG

TACLOBAN

1 MANO PO 6
2 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE
3 ANG PANDAY

DUMAGUETE

1 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE
2 MANO PO 6
3 ANG PANDAY

BACOLOD

1 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE
2 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
3 MANO PO 6
4 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
5 NOBODY, NOBODY, BUT JUAN
6 ANG PANDAY

ILOILO

1 AMO DARLING KONG ASAWANG
2 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11
3 MANO PO 6
4 ANG PANDAY
5 NOBODY, NOBODY, BUT JUAN
6 I LOVE YOU GOODBYE

GENSAN

1 MAYAMAN
2 MANO PO 6
3 ANG PANDAY
4 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11

ILOCOS NORTE (NOW OPEN!)

1 MANO PO 6
2 ANG PANDAY
3 SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 11

MOVIEWORLD GENSAN

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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bernie G. Velasco

Day of good wishes, gratitude

Compiled by Marinel Cruz and Rayan San Diego Jr.

Regine Velasquez

My wish for the coming year is for typhoon Ondoy to be able to rebuild their lives. My personal prayer is centered a "thank you" to God. I am very grateful that my family and Ogie's (Alcasid) family were unharmed during the recent calamities, and that we're all safe. I'm happy that the entertainment industry is slowly recovering, too. Hopefully, the good news will continue. My wish for the whole country is for us to elect a new president peacefully. I hope people will finally wake up. A lot of Filipinos are angry and frustrated because, at the moment, it looks as if we can't do anything. But next year, come election time, we can all make a big difference. I hope people will think very carefully before voting.

VINA Morales and daughter Cosme.

DENNIS Trillo

Vina Morales

I wish that more people would support local projects. Please, if an entertainer event he/she likes it! It means a lot to the supporters. They give us work. Save local showbiz.

Dennis Trillo

My only wish for myself is that I remain healthy, so that I can fulfill all my responsibilities. I can't ask for anything more; I'm doing five shows now. For my family, I want us to bond with them more often. I want them to forget their problems. I hope my son Calix will grow up to be well-behaved. He can be rambunctious and stubborn sometimes.

As for the movie industry, I hope it will be able to recover its prestige and produce more quality films. I hope there will be more entertainment movies — so that people's views on films would broaden as well. I hope more people will watch indie movies. For the country, I pray for peaceful elections. Months before the elections, we already noticed a tragedy, the Maguindanao massacre. I pray for all victims to rest.

Danica Sotto

I wish that the network we would stop. I know there's such a thing as friendly competition and I think it should be that way, but sometimes where we watch TV things get really ugly. Instead of putting each other down, I wish we would all think of how we can improve our shows. Everything can be done in an orderly manner. Let's check our hearts, everyone.

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(We're running this guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday movie viewing. The 10th MMFF runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2010.)

Shake, Rattle and Roll 11

Produced by: Regal Entertainment

First Episode: "Lemony Lupa"

Directed by: Jessel Blanco Hernandez; **stars:** Antonio Aquitania, Raymar Cruz, Eyo Villanueva, Mitzi Escudero, Ranya Guerla, Dennis Baco and Ruby Baco.

The story revolves around a group of friends who were camping only to find Baco (Aquitania) pursued by monstrous undertaker called "Lemony Lupa."

Second Episode: "Hatdol"

Directed by: Rico Ilustrisimo; **stars:** Maja Salvador, Mark Anthony Fernandez, Gina Alajar, Joem Bascon, Irma Adlawan and Alice Castro.

Maja plays Chloe, a young doctor-intern at a provincial hospital haunted by demons as once after the encounters a female patient suspected of carrying a deadly flu virus. Chloe's soul brings her to Bethel Resorts (Pansacola), who turns out to be Chloe's former boyfriend. Old flames are rekindled while both Pansito and Chloe battle the demons.

Third Episode: "Clay Ukay"

Directed by: Erik Michael Perez; **stars:** Bella Stathovani, Zoren Legaspi, Shaqqie Tuason and John Lapus.

Bella and Zoren play wouldbe couple Karla and Harold whose wedding plans are threatened by a "possessed" gown from "okay ukay."

GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN BY JES ABRERA

PUGAD BABOY BY PHIL JAMES

DEAR SIGE, MERRY CHRISTMAS! I LIKE MY LEGO SPACE SHIP, THANKS FOR THE GIFT!
SI SIGE, SI CRISAW NGA, SI BUGOY, SI BOBOY, SI TOTOY, SI TOTOY, SI TOT

Ruffa, Sharon join 'Millionaires' row

RUFFA GUTIERREZ TAKES THE HOT SEAT in "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" on Jan. 2 followed by Megastar Sharon Cuneta on Jan. 9.

The show's "Who Deserves to be a Millionaire?" host-just Christmas edition kicked off with CNN Hero of the Year Efren Peñaflorida Jr. as contestant. Lucy Torres-Gomez also faced host Vic Sotto with her double-contestant partner. The show airs Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. on TV5.

'Biyaheng 2010'

Broadcast journalists Jessica Soho and Arnold Clavio revisit the past and relive it to the country's haters through the 2010 elections in "Biyaheng 2010: The GMA News and Public Affairs Special." It airs on Dec. 27 at 10:45 p.m. on GMA-7.

Best Dance Crew

More challenges and extreme dance moves are expected in dark TV's "Bunsty Audison Presents: America's Best Dance Crew Season 3" on Sundays at 9 p.m.

A P100,000 cash prize goes to the group voted as America's Best Dance Crew.

Joining Sunday this season are host Bunsty Lopez, backstage correspondent Lucha Rafferty and judges JC Chavez, Lil Mama and Shane Sparks.

' Al' with Ellen

"American Idol" returns next month on Q Channel 11 for a new season with a new judge—Emmy-winning host Ellen DeGeneres.

Jim Carrey

SANDRA Bullock

Stars share . . .

From page E1

good wine. I've now actually fallen in love with the Christmas tree thing, like going and buying a tree. But if we're away from home, we'll make stuff like bird birthdays on the beach.

Kate Hudson

We usually go to Colorado. The holidays are my favorite time because we're all traveling so much. It's the one time we all get together. My dad [stepfather Bart Bonniol] hosts. My mother (Goldie Hawn) cooks a mean stew. That's sort of our tradition. I always look forward to that. The family's growing. There are so many little more. Our family holidays are becoming more festive. It's fun to look around at this time and see the little creatures growing, screaming at each other and laughing. It's the best moment.

I got cool one year. I was a little girl, and I remember I got a Ride-and in my stocking. I was like, rather down what-not? The worst gift I got was a Dust Buster. It was also the funniest and the most civilized we've ever all in one. I laughed my butt off. I have used that Dust Buster more than any other Christmas gift.

Jim Carrey

It's all about family for me. I have a little boy running around now which is fun with everything imaginary and wonderful. I get to see an unfiltered look at Christmas and everything through Evan as I feel really lucky that way.

I concentrate on the consumerism stuff less at this time of the year when most people let go of their preconceptions, where some do the right thing and hang out with the family and break bread. Even if initially they don't want to do it, then they realize, this is what it's about. This is good and they release. It's the one time of the year when you look at your life, your family and spend time with them.

Presents? I don't like all that stuff. I don't want people to get me presents. If you're going to get me something, donate to my charity. I don't need any more stuff. I go, "It's beautiful but where am I going to put it?" Every once in a while, I appreciate T-shirts. That's my favorite Christmas present—sugar-free T-shirts.

What do I like to give? I try to give things that are appropriate for ones every few years. I'll get everybody the same stuff that I ordered from TV-ads like the Sammy Slicer Daughter.

My childhood memories are a little bit warped. At Christmas, there were a lot of divide-and-conquer-by-home—some of them good, some of them not so good but there were characters everywhere. My job after the annoying relatives left...the ones who never sent thank-and-out of control—was to just sit in a chair. I took it upon myself to break the tension that was in the room. I would station my drunken relatives. I would have anything every time and. I'm a little kid pretending we're drunk.

Roland Emmerich

I'm likely to be in Thailand for the holidays. (To be continued later today.)

E-mail the columnist at <mtopacio_1969@yahoo.com> and read his blog, "The Napoleon Report," at <http://blogs.inquirer.net/napoleonreport>.

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MOVIEWORLD

Stars share their holiday state of mind

LOS ANGELES—A BLESSED Christmas to one and all!

Me me sharing some stars' holiday wishes, plans and thoughts. Then you must once a lot about their personality.

Mariah Carey

You're talking to Little Miss Christmas! I love Christmas. You're going to think this is totally over the top—I love a South Christmas and cool reindeer to come to the house for my friends' kids

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD
Melissa V. Fernandez

or seven-year-old nephews, whatever. It is beyond festive. That's part of the gift that I give to my friends and extended family. We bring them to Aspen, Colorado. It's so much fun. Last year, my boyfriend (Nick Cannon) dressed up as Santa Claus and made up everybody's cute (laughter). As far as giving gifts, I'm thrilled every year so I just go shopping when I get there because that's all I really like to do. I can barely ski.

A pet brings the creative best out other favorites. I know it sounds very bizarre but last year we had this cheesy and it looked like the window were going to land. It was very beautiful.

Sandra Bullock

We observe the German tradition that her mother was German) on Christmas Eve and then we also have the Christmas Day morning which is called the feliz ate used to. But they've also gotten used to having Christmas Eve as well. Bids will get used to anything that sounds presents (laughter). They're happy to adapt whatever families function you want to set up to. Long as it's presents.

Nicole Kidman

I was most grateful for the health of my family. As for my celebrations (UNCLEAR) I thought that for about 3 years I made a person who lives day by day. That's something I try to live by anyway. I try to stay in a place of wide-eyed wonder at this gift of life. I'm spending the holidays with my family. I'm cooking and swimming in Australia.

Charlize Theron

When I was growing up in South Africa, we didn't have a Christmas tree and until like that. My family was very (laughter). We didn't really do the Christmas thing. So I was [unreported] that my mother didn't. I would be like,

"My friends get gifts and stuff." My mom would buy me a box of tampons and she'd be like, "Here you go, you got a gift." It made this annual thing disappoint.

What is really true about you food and people being together. I love that. I like the idea of making tons of food. We have a tradition where my mom, four other friends and I cook together. The kitchen is a mess. I start baking like three days before. Drink tons of

STORY ON

New TV5 bares big plans for 2010

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

TV5, HOW UNDER THE MANAGEMENT of Manny Pangilinan's MediaQuest, has big plans for the coming year, said Bobby Barrera, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

Touring the All Seasons hotel in Subic Bay recently, Barrera said because that the new management is looking into improving the Dolphin network's signal.

"It bought and installed a 1,000 transmitter from Tulfo, which can serve the Metro Manila area, said Barrera. "We are looking into improving our transmission nationwide. The people of

New transmitter, studio, new shows and movies, too

MediaQuest know the importance of a good infrastructure."

Apart from strengthening its signal, TV5 is also upgrading its production equipment, especially his news gathering. There are rumors that former news executives from rival stations will beef up the station's news and public affairs department soon.

First to join TV5—as head of News and Public Affairs—is Jacobi Cruz-Valdes, former ABS-CBN Current Affairs head.

"I don't mind working with professionals like Jakes, who's an industry stalwart," said Barrera.

He added that the new management may build a new studio. (Bid's more accessible data to present site is Broadcast. "We want to improve the work flow," he said. "Our goal is to have a completely tape-less digital system in place."

'The best and brightest'

For her part, Valdes said: "We are really expanding our news organization. We are looking for the best and the brightest."

Pangilinan, in a pre-taped interviewal presentation, told the Ad-Congress delegates that he is infatuated on TV5 as a "long-term investment."

(After only a year, TV5's (then-ABC 5) position blockbuster partners, MPB Productions, left the network to old foes ex-owner Tony Boy Cojuangco.)

'Big vision'

Pangilinan said his "big vision" has TV5 playing a "crucial" role in the media landscape. The new team's fortunes: "Provide the best content for everyone, everywhere, anytime."

"We want to be gadget neutral," said Barrera. "We will go to any platform. Multiplatform, through television, cable, satellite, digital direct-to-home satellite service (Cignal), and mobile TV (SkyTV)."

How TV shows will be launched next year, is still forthcoming.

Pangilinan also announced in the Ad-Congress that TV5 will go into movie production, promising to churn out one new movie (from Pete ABS-CBN's Star Cinema and GMA Films combined.

Barrera said he planned this area is "a multi-million peso investment," and the target is "at least 15 movies a year."

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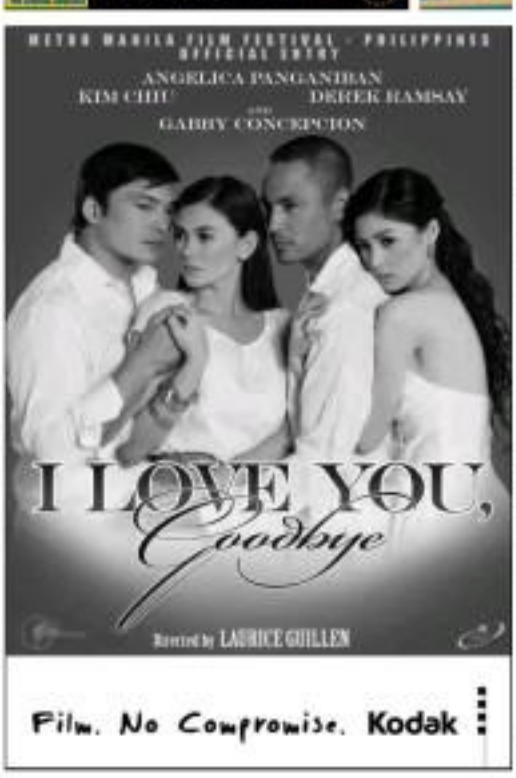

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